

Kitty Hawk Kites, Nags Head, NC	High Volume, Low Personal Attention
1 solo lesson (5 flights)	\$79.00
1 aerotow tandem	\$129.00
5 day Camp with 2 tandems	\$600.00
Varied Sites	No
Total	\$1200 depending on progress
Special Skills	Foot-launch, Aero-tow and Truck-tow

Raven Sky Sports, Wisconsin	Medium Volume, Personal Attention varies w group size
2 intro aerotow tandems	\$270.00
1 solo lesson and tandem	\$149.00
1 tandem flight to 3 K altitude	\$149.00
2 tandems to 3 K altitude	\$290.00
5-6 hill solos and 10 tandems	\$1395.00

Mission Soaring, San Francisco, CA	Medium Volume
1 solo lesson (at least 6 flights)	\$160.00
5 solo lesson package	\$700.00 (Lesson discounts with equipment purchase.)
Additional lessons	\$140.00
Total	\$1050 - \$1700 depending on equipment/progress
Special Skills	All foot launch and static tow.

Cost/Benefit Comparison of Hang Gliding Schools

With supervision and assistance, hang gliding at beginner levels, is very safe and even easy. However, earning the skills to become an independent and rated hang pilot is a different situation. Hang gliding requires more physical and technical skill than most casual sports. With independence comes the possibility of pilot error. Since the consequences of mistakes are much greater than most activities, the instruction leading to independence must be very incremental, thorough and comprehensive. Any minor skill gap usually results in an accident. Therefore, the efforts to train your body and mind to avoid them are greater. There is no "let me go and let me get the 'feel' for this". **Instruction comes first, equipment second.** During instruction the student pays for the time, expertise, use of training equipment and the actual practice it takes to integrate the physical, strategic and emotional skills to remain safe. These proficiencies allow for simple, basic and fun high altitude hang gliding.

There are four skill levels each denoted by United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (USPHA) rating: Hang I; Hang II; Hang III; Hang IV. All instruction starts with supervision and direct physical assistance for simple motor skills. These skills get more complex and varied as lessons proceed. At Hang I, performing perfect launches, keeping wings level and landing on ones feet in ground skimming flight is the goal. At Hang II, higher flight, turns and landing on designated spot and developing critical in-flight decision-making skills and learning about weather and natural lift sources is the goal. At Hang III, more airtime and varied experiences further develop your skills. At Hang IV, you can learn to go as high 15,000 feet and 100 miles. The learning process is fun, vigorous, interesting and challenging but definitely not "casual". It takes discipline and persistence to properly learn hang gliding. However, the more effort you put into it, the greater reward you receive. There are control skills, strategic/technical skills and emotional skill to be learned.

On average, it requires 100 training hill flights (10-14 lesson days) to attain the Hang II rating proficiency no matter what package is bought. Replacing one tandem for every other set of 10 training hill flights may decrease the number of training hill flights to 50. This is a consistent fact between all school good programs. Of course, this will vary somewhat between students. All students have weak areas (physical, technical, emotional) that will cause progress to vary.

Dragon Flyers, Two Harbors, MN	Low Volume, High Personal Attention
1 intro tandem aerotow	\$145.00
1 intro aerotow lesson	\$60.00
Each lesson thereafter	\$115.00
Special Skills	All aerotow

Wallaby Ranch, Orlando Florida	High Volume, Low Personal Attention
1 tandem aerotow introduction	\$95.00
3 tandem aertow lessons	\$225.00
10 aeortow lessons (goal to solo)	\$650.00
20 aerotow lessons (goal to solo)	\$1200.00
Tandem thermal instruction	\$150.00
Special Skills	All Aerotow

Lookout Mountain, Georgia	High Volume, Attention varies with group size
5 solo hill flights/1 tandem intro	\$200.00
12 solo hill flights/1 tandem/1 high alt supervision	\$240.00
Varied Sites?	No
Total	\$1000 to \$1700 depending on package

Any site can go from Novice Hang II to advanced Hang IV with a simple change in wind direction and speed. Learning how to recognize these changing challenges and the decision-making skills to fly them is even more important to safety than the basic physical skills of Hang II (a drivers license does not qualify to race in the Indy 500). After all, now you have the physical skills to place your body at high elevations, speeds and complex situations. Thus, you must differentiate **control skills from strategic/technical skills.**

The Hang II with high altitude strategic skills is the practical entry level rating - although slightly more training through Hang III is ideal. Any training less than Hang II, and attempts at independent, unsupervised flying usually results in "informal" costs in equipment damage and medical bills. This rating allows one to visit Hang II rated mountain sites and fly in Hang II rated conditions. Paying for lessons through Hang III is the safest, quickest, and most reliable way of learning how to hang glide at many more sites!

All students of hang gliding will eventually realize that seeking formal and comprehensive of instruction is a "social" and USPHA regulatory requirement. The flying community treasures each flying site. An irresponsible accident at any flying site can close it down. Major crashes attract the media and scare landowners and public stewards of our flying sites. Our USHPA site insurance requires competency and official pilot ratings.

A student pays for a USHPA certified quality of instruction, the instructor's availability and attention to your particular needs, repetitions of motor skills (number of hill flights) or attempts at tasks, equipment support, provision of ideal instructional experiences. It is up to the student to earn the USHPA official rating requirements given these conditions. Only a few other complex sports, provides this level personal relationship, attention, effort and service

If the **instructor/school and student** makes themselves available when the weather is right then progress will occur much faster. Steady regular effort - even over a longer term - leads to progress. Sporadic effort results in needed review lessons and more expense.

Windsports, LA California	Medium Volume – High Attention		
	Single Lesson (7 flights)	5 Lesson Package	Equipment Purchase Plan
Solo Dune	\$120	\$110	\$85
Tandem	\$199	\$150	\$135
Total	\$1714.00	\$1540.00	\$1190.00

Equipment Purchase

Equipment performance and pilot skill are interdependent. Purchasing equipment recommended by the instructor - especially if the relationship allows the time for customization in manufacture (perfect sizing and design) - enormously improves the chances of smooth entry into the sport. Inappropriate purchases (too advanced designs, wrong fittings) will hold back a pilot's **control skills** since the feeling of the glider/equipment as an extension of the body is missing. Students with the wrong equipment wind up 'consciously' controlling the glider or start having 'incidents' that undermine confidence and delaying **strategic skills**. At worst, they crash and drop out. Use of parachutes, new gliders, pod harnesses, ham radios and variometers should be part of instruction.

Equipment	Cost
Full face Kevlar helmet	\$ 200.00
Radio	\$ 100.00
Novice Harness	\$ 750.00
Parachute	\$ 450.00
Novice Glider	\$ 3200.00
Variometer	\$ 250 - \$1200.00
Car Rack	\$ 50.00 - \$300.00
Total	\$ 5150.00

Appropriate equipment is often kept for a decade or more. The novice level glider is easier to set-up, fly and land so that it is often kept as a back-up when the pilot purchases the next step in performance. It is often used as the beach or mellow conditions option where sink rate is more important than glide performance.

There are some significant differences in the way schools operate. Mostly, these differences arise from how much instructional volume that can handle, how consistently they can provide the service (weather and technology is the determinant) and how committed the school is to helping you to overcome the inevitable frustrations in learning.

Low volume instructors/schools can provide lots of personal attention, long term support, counseling and local expertise but may not be efficient. High volume schools may be efficient but not provide personal attention and long term support for all the problems that emerge in becoming skilled in your local area. Long term support comes in the form of ongoing local flying advice, encouragement & strategy and equipment repair, maintenance & inspection. This is difficult to get from a school out-of-state.

There is enormous direct physical effort on the part of the instructor through the fifth lesson. Later, when flying unassisted, there is more wear and tear on the gliders, more equipment and student risk and dependence on the instructor's judgment on ideal training experiences (keeping the student within their skill level). Late in the lessons, depending on whether the school decides to offer the service, there are travel and instructional costs for orientation to real mountain sites. Scuba diving has much in common with the level of the physical and technical skills, equipment, incremental experiences and tours required.

Large centralized schools can parse out the physical effort, instructional assistance danger, time, gas consumption, wear and tear on equipment, rents, and insurance among many, often speeding the process of learning (within biological and weather limits). But, usually they cannot provide the experiences at different kinds of sites that increases skill. Big schools may primarily use tow technology that decreases the physical effort of launching and landing but this comes at the expense of crucial foot-launch and landing skills. Handling the variability in sites and conditions is what hang gliding is all about.

All schools must recover initial equipment costs, field rental, maintenance, travel costs, insurance, USHPA membership and certification fees, office/administrative costs, and weather pre-planning time before any profit. Since all schools depend on irregular weather, a student pays for the availability (being on call) of the instructor or service.

Oregon Hang Gliding School, Corvallis	Low Volume, High Personal Attention, Local support and orientation
5 foot-launch solo flights and 1 tandem Intro	\$220.00

Step (three lessons)	Single Lesson (7-10 flights)	3 lesson Package	Equip. in Steps	No Equip	Equip Package
One	\$130	No flight limits	\$300	\$390	\$85
Two	\$150	No flight limits	\$300	\$450	\$85
Three	\$130	No flight limits	\$300	\$390	\$85
Four	\$150	Task based	\$300	\$450	\$85
Total			\$1200	\$1680	\$1050

Varied Sites/Conditions	Yes
Services	Free Tents/\$7.00 camping. Online tutorials. Interactive Tests. Stationary winch
Special Skills	Foot-launch & dolly tow. Variable training hills, dune & mountain conditions. Personal equip. orientation/chute and weather clinic

Small schools must take on fewer students but come up with the resources to provide the same experiences over a longer period. Small schools may have to be more decentralized to provide the next incremental experience. Often, this brings on added expenses such as driving to appropriate sites and much more time away from their families and personal lives. This is a benefit in the program because it gives the student a chance to experience different weather conditions and natural flying sites over a period of time and provides more realistic local skills. Also, student brains need time and sleep to incorporate complex skills. Intensive "short" programs only can assure reliable skills in the conditions and sites in which they were learned..

Lower volume schools and instructors depend on equipment sales to remain profitable enough to consistently provide instruction. Since the proper equipment is a major variable in safe hang gliding, purchasing equipment with the advice and assistance of your instructor is recommended. In fact, the instructional program may require having the customized equipment at the appropriate step in the program. There is a logical progression of equipment you will need as skills increase. Purchasing equipment from your local instructor provides long term support, service, maintenance and continuing advice throughout your flying career.

There are lifestyle costs as well. New pilots must have a place to store a twenty foot long glider and the ability to transport the glider to flying sites in Oregon and beyond. Many pilots have trucks or SUV's for transport, but some do very well with only mid-sized cars. Pilots often like to camp when traveling to some hang gliding hot spots so camping equipment is often purchased. Being part of the party of pilots flying motor-less aircraft for hours and miles is often a satisfying aspect of the lifestyle.

In the end, you get exactly what you pay for in hang gliding. ***Although amazingly fun and rewarding***, hang gliding requires you to transform yourself into a bird - not a trivial thing. It also requires you to consider the flying community values and standards before your own. Do not expect a smooth entry into the sport unless you are willing to put in the time, effort and fees for complete training. **After the third successful lesson most students are hooked.**