

## Things To Remember:

- Only fly in a suitable area – clear of any danger, trees, people or animals.
- NEVER fly above 200 feet (60m), or 100 feet (30m) when near an airport (unless with written CAA permission)
- Don't run with a kite – it's generally pointless, and frequently hazardous!
- Never allow your line to become a "heap" on the ground – IT WILL TANGLE I promise!
- Don't let your line/s cross those of another flier – they'll cut as if through butter!
- Wear strong gloves when flying all but the smallest of single-line kites, **line-burns hurt** (not normally a problem with multi-line kites, as you should be using flying handles or straps).
- Tidy up after flying – bits of line, broken spars etc. left about can cause harm to both people and animals.
- Be careful when flying any large kite for the first time - the wind can (and will) change in seconds!

This has only been a very basic introduction to the wonderful world of kites. There's a wealth of information available on the Internet!

Our MKF website [www.mkf.org.uk](http://www.mkf.org.uk) contains information about the Club and it's activities, or for an up-to-date list of MKF & other kite events try [www.kitecalendar.co.uk](http://www.kitecalendar.co.uk). You could also try my site [www.jimsworld.me.uk](http://www.jimsworld.me.uk) - as well as kite information, I've included links to many useful "kite websites".

If you wish to become a Member of "The Midlands Kite Fliers" - pick up an application form from the Club Notice Board at one of our events, print one from the MKF web site, or contact me and I'll send one to you. There's much to be gained from Membership - Club newsletter, insurance, kite and event info, discount from some kite shops, kite plans and more.

Well, that's probably enough from me for now, so have fun, but remember – **when flying, you are directly responsible for the safety of others as well as yourself, so please, act in a responsible manner at all times.**

I'll look forward to meeting you in a field sometime - with a line in your hand, the wind at your back and a smile on your face!

"JimC"  
(MKF Mem Sec)

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# "An Absolute Beginners Guide to Kites and Kite Flying"

By Jim Cronin

**By picking up this leaflet, you've shown at least a passing interest in kites - so read on to learn a little more about this fascinating pastime. I won't "turn you into an expert overnight" that only comes with practice and experience. All I want to do is explain the basics, whilst hopefully making you aware of some of the potential hazards.**

## Kites

Modern kites are generally made from "Ripstop" Nylon, and framed with carbon-fibre or glass-fibre tubing or rod – though dowel or bamboo can be seen on single-liners. I'd avoid the cheap plastic twin-line kites (though for children, plastic single-liners are usually not 'too' bad). Try to buy your kite from a "kite shop" rather than a "toy shop" (this will usually improve it's chances of flying no end!)

Kites can be grouped first, by the number of lines used to fly them:

"**Single Liners**" are generally not too "controllable" (with the notable exception of "fighters"). "**Twin Liners**" are very controllable. "**Triple Liners**" are controllable, but quite rare. "**Quad Liners**" are extremely controllable (many will fly in reverse).

Kites are either "soft" or "framed". Soft kites hold their shape by virtue of being inflated by the wind (like a parachute) whilst "framed" or "rigid" kites have a framework of "spars" holding them in the correct shape. Two and four line kites can be further sub-divided into "stunt" and "power" types. Power kites are very strong pulling and can be used to propel buggies etc. A power (or traction) kite is more than capable of lifting a person into the air, and should only be flown by an experienced flier, or under the guidance of one. Stunt types, on the other hand, are chosen more for their aerobatic properties – though some may still pull ferociously in a strong wind! The "bottom" lines on a four-liner are actually "brakes" and can be used to decrease the pull/speed, as well as steer the kite around the sky.

Some kites can be difficult to "master", but most can be flown to a reasonable level by anyone with a little patience. There really is no "correct" wind for kite flying; so much depends on the design of the kite. There are kites designed to fly in "no wind conditions" (some are flown indoors!). If you find yourself with a kite that "won't fly" either there's a problem with the way it is set up, or you are trying to fly in an unsuitable wind. You'll rarely come across a kite that genuinely cannot be made to fly (though they do exist!). Generally a gentle to moderate breeze is fine, but avoid strong or turbulent winds.

Something worth remembering is that a largish kite will generally fly better than a small one. Go for something around 1m (2m is even better) though bear in mind that a larger kite will pull harder, and need a stronger line. If in doubt - ask.

Look at the kites you see in the sky at events, marvel at the innovative designs, talk to the people flying them – you'll invariably find them helpful and approachable. Keep in mind though, some types of kite require a great deal of concentration – it may be wise to pick your moment!

## Kites For Children

Buying a multi-line kite for young children is usually a mistake; they rarely understand the concept of controlling one (with some very notable exceptions). So often they end up wrecking the kite after dragging it around the park, becoming thoroughly disillusioned in the process. Better to start with a simple single-liner, moving on if the “bug” bites. Also the plastic single-liners can usually be made to fly quite well – not so the twin-liners.

## Fighter Kites

These are generally small (12 – 18 inches) fragile kites, flown on a single line - yet capable of being steered around the sky with great precision. When the line is taut the kite will fly in the direction in which the nose is pointing. Give some slack and the kite will spin. Wait until it is pointing in the direction in which you wish to go – and apply tension again. That’s the theory – but to master the fighter takes a great deal of practice!

## Lines

Things have changed a lot since the days of flying with a “ball of string”. Lines are now made from many materials, each with its own useful properties. Different lines may be used for different purposes:

For flying **single-liners**, it’s useful to have some elasticity in the line, making it less likely that a sudden gust of wind will exceed the rated strength of the line. “Polyester” and the more expensive “Dacron” are popular for single-liners.

For **two and four line** kites, you want a line with as little “stretch” as possible (either temporary or permanent) as the aim is to have a set of lines of exactly equal length. Materials used include “Dyneema” and “Spectra”.

Any difference in line lengths will adversely affect the handling of the kite – making accurate flying more difficult. For this reason “advanced” fliers tend to spend what seems like a lot of money on “hi-tech” lines, you’ll know when you need to do this – the more modest lines are more than adequate to learn on, just make sure they are exactly the same length.

The one not mentioned yet is “fighter line” used on the small fighting kites. This is light cotton line with a very low breaking strain. True “fighting” takes place with “Manja” (line covered in powdered glass) the object being to cut the opponents line, though this should only ever be used in organised competition due to it’s extremely antisocial tendencies!

## Line Safety

Any kite line is potentially dangerous. When flying, be aware of where your lines are – a modern sport kite can reach speeds of up to 70 mph and a taut line travelling at that speed can cause serious injury to anyone with whom it comes into contact – and will cut another’s lines in a flash!

It’s not uncommon for sport kite fliers to have their lines laid along the ground or, worse still, just above the ground; the kite “parked” in preparation for take-off and the lines “pegged down”. This is a potentially hazardous practice so should be kept to a minimum by only laying lines out immediately before flying. Watch your lines when on the ground and don’t leave a “parked” kite unattended. If you take a break from flying, wind in your lines. Ideally, line should be on a winder or in the air - avoid creating “trip hazards” for others!

## The Wind Window

This simply means the area of the sky in which a kite will fly. Though mainly of interest to the multi-line flier, it applies equally to single-liners. The theoretical maximum “window” can be envisaged as follows:

Assume a wind blowing from the North, you are standing in a field, your back to the wind, arms outstretched to the West and East. The “window” is the three dimensional area in front of you, between your outstretched arms, the ground, and an imaginary line running vertically through your body and up into the sky. Sounds complicated I know, it isn’t really – just keep your back to the wind and you should be ok.

## Launching Your Kite.

Make sure you have a safe, clear area in which to fly – no trees, phone/power-lines, houses, animals, people, vehicles etc. downwind, or to the side of, your position – for the length of your line/s. Stay away from other kites/fliers, or be prepared for a quick lesson in how well lines can cut one another – you have been warned! Kites can behave very strangely in turbulent winds so be sure you are well clear of any of the above. Turbulence is created on the “downwind” side of buildings / trees – extending for many times the height of the obstruction. You can, for example, expect to suffer the effects of the turbulence created by a row of 50 foot trees, for up to 500 feet downwind of their position. Another thing to keep in mind, is the way in which a kite can be “sucked down” into the clutches of the dreaded “kite-eating” trees, the moral being, never let your kite fly directly over trees or buildings, if you want to keep it, that is!

The easiest kite for the beginner to launch, is usually the **Framed Single-Liner** – made even easier if you have an assistant. Assemble the kite, attach the line (leaving your assistant holding the kite) and pay out about 100 feet of line, walking into the wind. Instruct your assistant not to throw the kite into the air, but to hold it lightly, in a “nose-up” position, releasing it as you apply tension to the line. Having paid out your line, place the reel on the ground and hold the line in gloved hands. Then, having first checked that you have a clear area behind you, walk slowly backwards – taking in line, hand over hand, and laying it neatly on the ground (in large loops) as you go.

Your assistant will have released the kite and it should be rising steadily into the air as you take in line. When the kite is about 30 feet in the air, start slowly letting out the line again until the kite starts to sink towards the ground – then stop and let it rise again. Repeat as needed, until you find yourself back at the reel with no line left on the ground. Pick up the reel, and let out more line as required. That’s all there is to it!

**Framed twin/quad line kites** are set on the ground in a “nose-skyward” position, leaning back, flying handles/loops (on the ends of the lines) pegged to the ground. In this position the kite should not move until the flier gently pulls the lines – at which time it should rise straight into the air (assuming equal tension on the lines). Let it rise until almost overhead before trying anything fancy. Best plan is to get some tuition from an experienced flier; this usually saves a lot of grief. Learning the basics is not difficult – but it helps to start with some advice.

**Smaller “Soft” twin/quad line kites** are not easy for the beginner to launch unaided. They generally fly slower, so are easier to learn – but it’s usually best to get an experienced flier to show you the ropes before venturing out on your own.