

What's Next?

By Rich Smith

So, you have soloed and perhaps have gone on to pass your written, practical and flight test or maybe you're still working toward that goal. Now you are an officially licensed glider pilot or at least can fly solo. Wait back up/rewind – it took a lot of effort, practice and studying to get there and it is a big accomplishment, so don't just end it now by slowly letting it go, drifting away a little at a time until you are no longer current. There is so much more out there, like badge flights, check out in a different glider or maybe even look into owning, cross country and contest.

I started my badge flights right after I soloed and it was challenging and fun – first there is the A badge which every solo pilot should have because that is the main requirement: a solo flight. Next is the B badge which is a solo flight of 30 minutes from a 2000' tow (add 1 ½ minutes per 100' above 2000') or for a 3000' foot tow you would need a flight of 45 minutes which is very doable on a good day at Alexandria. Then the C badge gets a little more interesting: Solo flight of 60 minutes from a 2000' tow (add 1 ½ minutes per 100' above 2000') or for a 3000' foot tow you would need a flight of 75 minutes: assembly/disassembly familiarization, ask to help one of the private guys to help (usually they are glad to get the help); simulated off field landing by covering the altimeter (I made one of my best landings since I wasn't focused on the instruments) and an accuracy landing (you have to do both of these landings for the practical anyway, so you will probably be practicing them). So for the A, B and C badges you have either done that or will before getting your license – you just need to get an SSA instructor that is qualified to sign you off – just ask!

From there the next badge is the Bronze badge and that will be preparation for cross country flying. This is where I am now and one of the requirements is 10 solo flights in a single-place glider. I recently got checked out in the club 1-34. Talk about fun, this is like going from a minivan to a sports car! It is much lighter than the 2-place gliders and response like a Porsche. I have had several people (non-pilots) ask how do you get checked out in a "Single-Place" glider well my suggestion is to get as much flying as you can in all the 2-place gliders we have. Study the manual and get familiar with the glider by sitting in it and know where all the controls are without looking at them. Get the feeling of how the controls are before ever moving in the glider. Talk to anyone and everyone about what you need to watch for on your first flight. If you have flown the Blanik and the Grob you have some understanding about how they "feel" and handle different so you will be better prepared to fly the 1-34. Even if you never want to fly cross-country you really owe it to yourself to fly the 1-34, you can reserve it for 2 hours so you can "double" your (fun) time from the club 2-place gliders. The 1-34 has a nifty new digital vario in it also. There are many more levels beyond the Bronze badge

I have also started to log my flights in the OLC which gives me a chance to compete on a local and national and even international level without ever leaving Alexandria. I can review my flights to see how I did and to see how I can improve. The flight recorder I have is only \$139.95 (FlyWithCE) from Wings and Wheels and fairly simple to use (I did get a little help). You can even log your flights on most smart phones with free apps.

There is so much to learn and do with gliders to hold your interest and make it fun and challenging – don't stop now. We have some great members here at CISS with a vast amount of skill and knowledge to pull from to help you improve and grow in the sport, so go out and talk to them or spend some time flying with them in one of the 2-place gliders.

Hope to see you soon at Alexandria, rising to new heights!

