



# TRACKING

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Tracking is one of the most essential skills a skydiver can have.

Tracking is to gain HORIZONTAL separation from other skydivers and this allows us to open our canopies with a far reduced risk of collision. Every relative work skydive has a potential for canopy collision and the potential is increased if you have elliptical canopies with a higher incidence of off heading openings.

Firstly give yourself enough altitude to track far enough to still open at the correct height. Most of the skydives I do now involve formation skydiving (belly to earth) and I track at 4,000ft, planning to open at 2,000ft. This includes my 4-way team jumps, Star Crests and anything up to a 20-way formation. If I am unsure of the skill level of my group, I may plan to track even higher.

For those of you who feel 3,500ft is a suitable track off height, because you have used it for so long, consider how much the canopies have changed and how much faster an off-heading opening can return you to where you started from.

## **How do we Track?**

Let go of any grips you have without using the formation to push off on. Turn to face directly away from the centre of the formation. Use a flat turn to do this by pushing down with your hands and lifting your head up and turning it in the direction of travel. Drop your legs slightly at the same time to create a "neggie". When you are faced directly away from the centre, straighten your legs first, then bring your arms back, then de-arch.

## **Why does this Work?**

When tracking we are trying to create a high lift wing configuration with our bodies and our rigs. At the start, we need airspeed, just as a plane does to get off the ground, and our legs provide this. Once we have some speed we can bring the arms back without causing a dive and move through to the de-arched position. As everyone's centre of gravity is slightly different, you will have to experiment to find your best de-arched position. For myself, I imagine that my body bends just below my rib cage, but others may have this centre of lift further back and some track best by sticking their bottom up. Push down with your legs and arms and pull your shoulders up to your ears. Tuck your head in. Your hands should be about 10-15 cm away from your body.

Two of the most common problems I see involve diving. People do not get sufficient speed before bringing their arms back and with the loss of support from the front half of the body, it drops. When legs are then straightened, this results in a dive. Others fail to de-arch at all and a delta is all that is created. This loses altitude far more rapidly than a track.

Tracking is a very energetic part of the jump, not just "adopt the position". It is some thing that you should be continually striving to improve. Talk to people on your dropzone that track well and find out their secrets. Organise tracking contests or just see if you can continually outperform all your friends. If you often seem to be the one closest to the middle when you open under canopy, do something about it.