

Parachuting: Taking the plunge

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You are sitting at the open door of the airplane, with the wind rushing by. Below you, the checkerboard of farmer's fields looks far away, almost toy-like. Suddenly your dream is interrupted by the jumpmaster's "GO!!!" At first you hesitate but then remember that you came here to make your first parachute jump, and you hurtle yourself into the thin air. A brief moment of disorientation...then all is quiet and you open your eyes to find yourself suspended beneath a brightly coloured parachute, feet dangling below.

You marvel at the feeling of security as you slowly descend toward the earth. You have just made your long-dreamed of parachute jump.

The feeling of ecstasy produced by your temporary freedom is with you for days afterward and you long for a chance to do it again. If you have always had a secret desire to throw your body out of a perfectly good airplane, then this Spring may be the time to take the plunge.

If you are wondering about the safety of the sport most Skydivers agree that the parachuting is only as dangerous as an individual makes it. They say more bones are broken by people falling off porches than by jumping out of airplanes.

The only prerequisites needed for the first big jump is a sense of adventure and you must be at least 18-years-old. One final point of reassurance: on your first few jumps, you are not required to open the parachute yourself. This is done by a "static line" system that automatically opens the parachute the moment you leave the plane. And you learn everything you have to remember in the First Jump Class preceding the jump.



Apparently the first jump isn't as hard as it seems.

These classes are necessary before you can jump. They are usually only 5 to 7 hours long. Weather permitting, you can receive the instruction and complete your first jump all on the same day. Instruction includes learning how the parachute system works, what to do in case of a malfunction (very rare with the type of canopy used on first jumps), proper procedure used to exit the aircraft and, of course, how to land properly. Once these simple tasks are learned, you are ready to become a skydiver.

There are many parachuting clubs in Southern Ontario. To the east are Gananoque Sport Parachute Club, located just past Kingston, and Winchester Skydivers located north of Kingston towards Ottawa. North of Toronto there are also two places to choose from, the first, Coldwater Parachute Centre is located just north of Barrie, off Highway 400. The other club north of the city is

the Parachute School of Toronto in Arthur at the junction of highways 6 and 9. South and west of Toronto are two more operations from which to choose. On the shores of Lake Huron is SWOOP, otherwise known as South-Western Ontario Parachutists. Jumping is done out of Grand Bend airport. And there is also the St. Catherines Parachute Centre. Jumping here is done at Burnaby and this club is known as one of the oldest in Canada.

The Canadian Sport Parachutist's Association regulates and licenses all instructors and most clubs include membership to CSPA in its price of the first jump. Further information about any of these clubs can be obtained by calling the Sport Parachuting clubs of Ontario at (416) 495-4285.

Camping is allowed on all Drop Zones and spectators are always welcome. The season has already begun.

The following people are eligible to vote in the *Excalibur* editorial elections to be held Thursday April 14 in Room 111 Central Square.

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•Any appeals should be submitted, with documentation, to the CRO, JAMES CARLISLE, c/o Merle Menzies, before 12:00 p.m., Thursday, April 14.
•Election rules are posted in the *Excalibur* office.

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