

Positioning in Relation to "Home" for the Release

The newly soloed student is still a stranger in the air. He has not had a lot of time to focus on his whereabouts. He may know where the gold mine is or the golf course, but what the heck is the horse farm? All the landmarks, with which we have become very familiar, may not be so with the beginning student. He has spent all his energy and focus on learning to fly the sailplane. Granted, while on tow, the instructor should ask, "Where is the gliderfield?" at various points during the tow, so the student becomes aware of his surroundings on tow as well as off tow.

The best chance we, as tow pilots, can give the beginning newly soloed student, is to tow him to his desired altitude and have him over the gliderfield or just slightly up wind. In this way he can best "find himself" in relation to the gliderfield. At least you have given him an easy upwind position, close, if not directly over the gliderfield. Sometimes directly over the field can be difficult for him as he can't find the field, because he can't see it directly under him. So slightly up wind is a bit better position than directly over, yet both release positions are the best options for a beginning or newly soloed student. Where he decides to go after release is, of course, his decision!

To add a little extra insurance that the student will quickly find the gliderfield, have him positioned so that as he makes his "release from tow" standardized right turn, he is headed right toward the airport. In other words, before you reach his desired release altitude, say 200 to 300 feet before, make a turn so that as the sailplane releases and turns right, he is automatically headed back toward the gliderfield. This is a little added nuance of the tow pilot, yet it works wonders, as the beginning student (hopefully) spots the gliderfield right away and does not have to circle in search of his safe "home".

