

How's Your Towing Attitude?

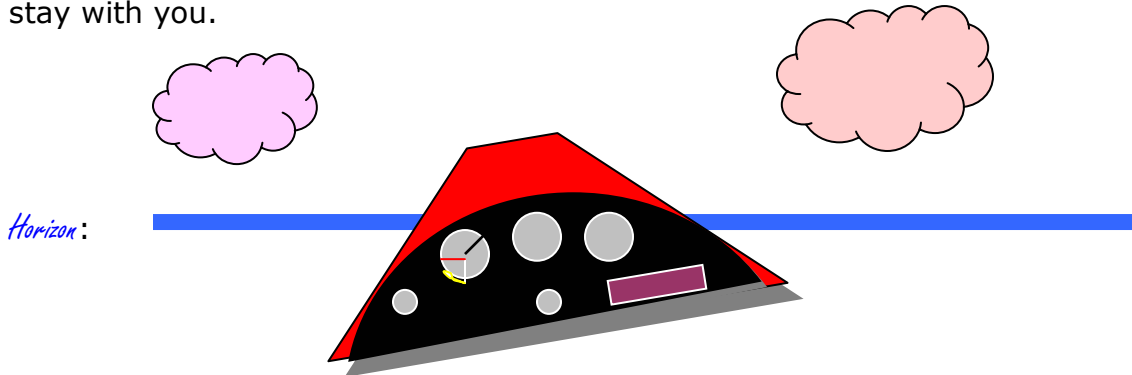
I remember learning to fly the tow behind the Super Cub. The hardest thing for me was trying to stay behind the tow plane during a turn. I used to dread those short 1000 foot tows we took to practice the pattern. I didn't like them because they generally consisted of one continuous turn! After awhile it became a challenge, just how tight could I stay in position? When the tow pilot would execute a turn, I can remember watching a shadow gradually move across the 2-33's instrument panel. Strange what we remember.

I try to remember what it was like to learn to fly tow whenever I have a student behind me. We must make turns in order to stay close to the glider field. For example, if we have a rope break, or if I have an engine failure or gas starvation we need to be close to the field. If the glider has a release failure, or gets extremely out of position because he is trying to swat a bee instead of flying tow, or any other emergency; we both really want to be close to the field. You may even have a student jump off tow early, much to his surprise and yours. Sometimes students are so used to practicing pattern tow after pattern tow that they will release at 1000 feet agl or 1500 agl out of habit, or reflex, instead of staying on and continuing the tow on up to 3000 feet or whatever predetermined altitude his instructor intended. So turning on tow and keeping the field within easy gliding distance is imperative.

Given there will be turns, lets make them as easy as possible for the student. We do this by initiating the turn with a gentle bank of only 10 or 15 degrees. Hold this gentle bank all the way through the turn. You'll notice when a student (or any pilot for that matter) is having difficulty, because he may go out the top of the turn (wide to the outside) and then may overcorrect and go through the inside bottom of his tow position. You will feel him moving around back there, so have a glance in your mirror, and then level out to give him a fighting chance to get back into position. Keeping the turns even and gentle is especially important with regard to a student's first solo flight. The first solo flight is a unique flight and the pilot's nerves may not be as steady as he/she would like. He will be doing his "level" best to stay behind you. This is not the time to roll into a nice 2 g bank and expect the poor fellow to stay with you. As he gains experience and increases his number of flights, his confidence and skills on tow will increase and then so may your bank angle.

Another key to being a good tow pilot is to **fly attitude!** Your airspeed indicator will change, showing an increase in airspeed when you are towing through lift. There is also a lag in your airspeed indicator. If you "chase" this changing airspeed indicator, you will be slowing down and then just in a few moments, after you note the change in airspeed during your scan of instruments, you will need to speed up! This constant rocking horse motion creates havoc behind you for the glider pilot. Keep the nose (cowling) of the

tow plane in the same position with relation to the horizon regardless of whether you are in lift or sink, calm or bumpy air. By flying attitude your airspeed will remain constant and the glider behind you will be better able to stay with you.



Always fly attitude

The above is an example of the view of the horizon from the Pawnee's cockpit when towing a 2-33 or 1-26 (slow airspeed). You will execute a nice, even, gradual turn if you keep the nose in a slightly banked position above the horizon all the way through the turn. There will be plenty of opportunity for thermalling and executing steeper banks while towing the high performance fellows or experienced pilots. Flying attitude and executing shallow turns will make you a tow pilot of choice as voted by the sailplane pilots and student pilots alike.