

Training for Young Drivers (Light Utility Vehicles)

1 Introduction

This document describes the training program for young drivers under sixteen years of age, and is compliant with the club's Policy on Young Drivers (Light Utility Vehicles) 18/02/17. The club accepts members at 14 years of age for flying training and trainees from 14 years of age may be considered for training as a Gator driver (subject to an assessment by a Gliding Instructor).

Section 2 describes how to drive the club's Gator Light Utility Vehicles. Section 3 sets out the restrictions that apply to young drivers under sixteen years of age. Section 4 describes how the Gators are used to perform the function of glider retrieves. Section 5 provides Gliding Instructors with a check list of actions that must be completed before authorising a young driver.

2 How to operate the John Deere Gator

Controls

The Gator is a left hand drive vehicle with a diesel engine. It has automatic transmission (no clutch). The controls are:

1. Start/Stop Key Switch;
2. Steering Wheel; *Always use both hands for steering.*
3. Foot Pedals: Foot Brake; *Both pedals are operated with the right foot only.*
Accelerator;
4. Gear Selector;
5. Handbrake.

These are the only controls that you need to use – do not touch any other controls.

Starting the Gator

1. Check that the handbrake is applied;
2. Check that the gear selector is positioned at N for Neutral; *The starter will not operate otherwise.*
3. Turn the Start/Stop Key Switch clockwise to the first position and pause until the orange warning light on the panel (second from the left) goes off.... *The first key switch position energises pre-start glow plugs in the engine.*
4.then turn fully clockwise. Release as soon as the engine starts. *If the engine does not start in five seconds, turn the key switch fully anti-clockwise, seek advice.*

Moving Off

1. With the engine idling select drive: *The revs must be at idle before selecting any gear, to avoid damage.*
 - L for Low is used for towing gliders at walking pace^{*} ;
 - H for High is used to move forward when not towing;
 - R for Reverse is used to move backwards.
2. Release the handbrake;
3. Move the vehicle by gently pressing the accelerator.

* It can be difficult to select L, be sure that the selector is in exactly the right place. If the lever does not move fully forward select H and then go back to L.

Stopping the Gator

1. Release the accelerator and apply the foot brake;
2. When stationary apply the handbrake;
3. Position the gear selector at N for Neutral;
4. Stop the engine by turning the Start/Stop Key Switch anticlockwise.

The handbrake will be applied more firmly if the foot brake is pressed at the same time.

Driving Technique

1. Do not turn sharply when driving at speed or on uneven ground, the Gator is not stable under these circumstances.
2. The seat has a lap strap which you are encouraged to use when driving at speed.
3. Extreme care is required when reversing – it is not easy to reverse the Gator smoothly. Look over your right shoulder before moving and use both mirrors to remain aware of what is behind.
4. With handbrake on and gear in Neutral it is permissible to briefly step out of the vehicle with the engine running, to look round for aircraft or to assist with attaching a glider, provided that you are on level ground. However, the vehicle must not be left unattended with the engine running.
5. On steep slopes, such as the slope to the east of the hangar, the gator should be parked parallel to the slope, not facing up or down the slope, with the front wheels pointing up the slope.

3 Limitations for those under 16 years of Age

As a driver under sixteen you are under the supervision of the launch point controller and the pilots and instructors that you are retrieving. We apply the following restrictions to drivers under the age of 16 in order to provide an additional margin of safety.

The Permitted Driving Area

The permitted driving area is anywhere within the boundaries of the airfield with the following exceptions:

- a) Not inside the Hangar;
- b) Not on the grass within 15 metres of the cutting that surrounds the Hangar.

Day Restrictions

You must not drive a Gator on public open days (including friends and family days).

Other Limitations

You must not carry other young people under 16 as passengers.

You must not reverse Gators closer than 6m to any aircraft/vehicle/person to the rear.

You must not retrieve solo pilots under the age of 16 without additional supervision.

4 Retrieving Gliders

Introduction

At The Park we conduct winching and aero towing from a relatively narrow strip of land. It is really important that all movements involving vehicles on the airfield are conducted in a disciplined manner. In particular, movements of vehicles and towed gliders should be as close to the side of the airfield as possible. Retrieves which are not close to the side cause landing gliders to land further into the field. This can easily cause significant delays to aero towing and, in a crosswind, winch launching. In the event of multiple landings the restriction of the landing area caused by thoughtless retrieving can quickly lead to a difficult situation for landing pilots.

If we maintain airfield discipline at all times, even on quiet days when it may not appear to be necessary, then we can be sure of conducting a safe and efficient operation on those important busy days from May to September.

General Considerations

When you are retrieving gliders you are driving a vehicle across an active airfield. On the area that is used by aircraft for landing or taking off the aircraft have absolute priority.

The tracks which are on each side of the airfield are for the use of vehicles. On the tracks the movement of vehicles is priority and aircraft are required to avoid them. You should, therefore, as far as possible, remain on the tracks when moving a vehicle on the airfield.

Drivers of vehicles which are moving towards the launch point have a good view of the approach and base legs; they can easily check that it is all clear for them to move into the field when this becomes necessary. Drivers of vehicles moving up the field, away from the launch point, do not have such a good view and need to be absolutely sure that it is clear before moving into the field.

In a strong crosswind be aware of the potential danger of being hit by a falling cable. Under these circumstances the safest place for you to be is in the cab of the Gator.

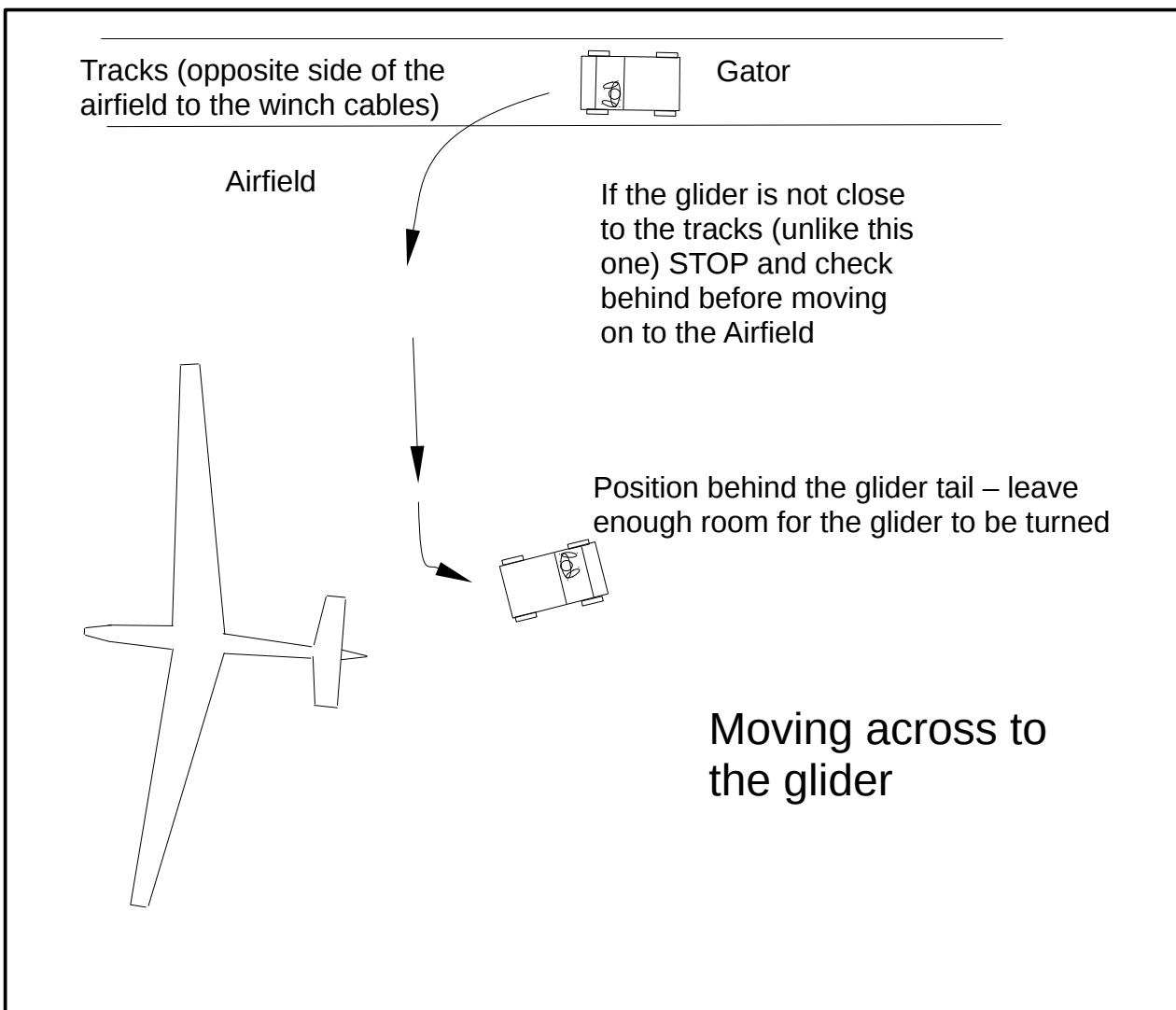
The Procedure

The procedure for retrieving gliders is as follows:

1. Before moving off from the launch point check that there are no aircraft on the approach and base legs. Have a good look before you enter the cab, alternatively turn the vehicle to face downwind. If it is clear then proceed across the airfield and drive on to the track on the opposite side of the airfield.
2. Move along this track until you are abeam the glider you want to retrieve. Faster moving oncoming vehicles, including cars and gliders with tow out gear, should give way to you, allowing you to stay on the tracks. If you meet a Gator or other vehicle towing a glider using a rope and wing tip holder, you will have to move off the track to pass them. It is essential that you do not move off the track and onto the field unless either:
 - a) Someone in the oncoming vehicle or retrieve party indicates that the approach is clear (thumbs up sign);
 - b) You stop the vehicle, turn round in your seat, to the left and then to the right, to look behind and check that the approach is clear.

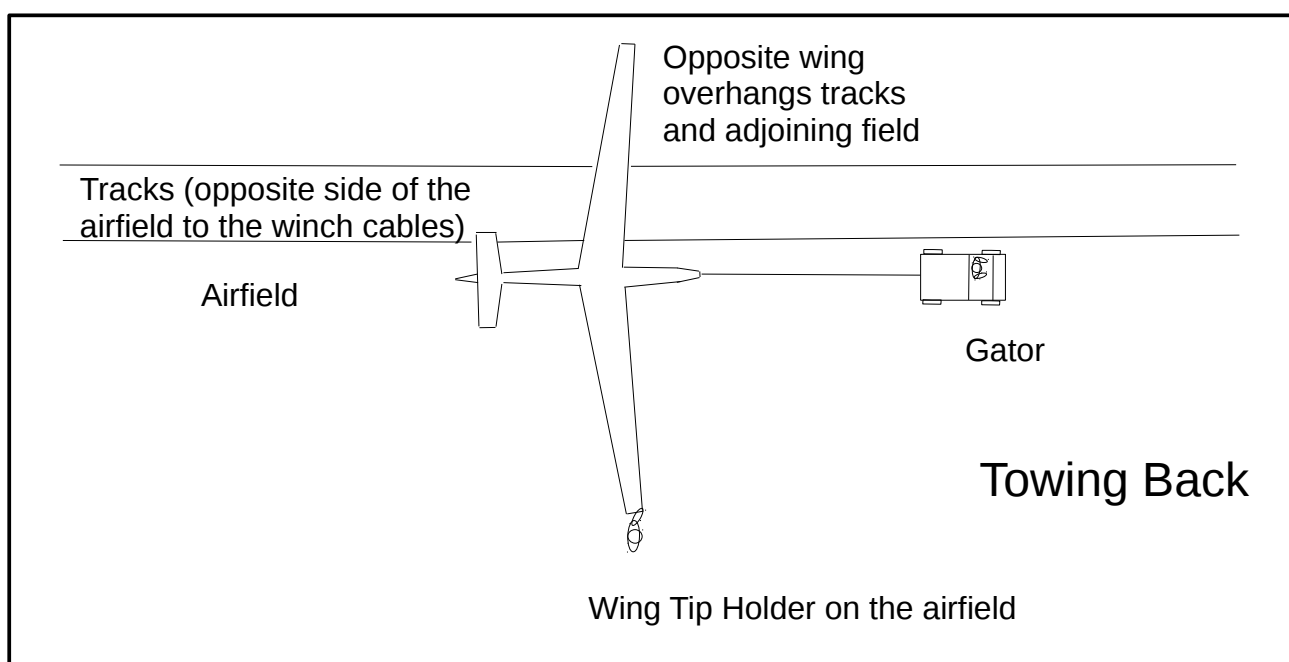
Move back onto the track as soon as you have passed the oncoming traffic.

3. When you are abeam the glider that you want to retrieve, and the glider is close to the track, turn and move towards the tail of the glider. If the glider is further into the field stop while on the tracks, turn round in your seat, to the left and then to the right, to look behind and check that the approach is clear. You are checking for any aircraft that may be landing between you and the glider you want to retrieve. Position the Gator behind the glider so that the tow rope will reach the glider nose hook when the glider is rotated through 180 degrees or so. This may involve a short reverse, do not reverse closer than 6 meters. It is preferable to leave the engine running to avoid possible stranding and reduce starter wear. Assist the glider pilot to turn the glider and hook onto the Gator, follow their instructions and be careful that the wing tip of the glider does not strike the Gator cab roof when the glider is turned. If the glider is further into the field check the approach again before moving off.



4. Using the L gear setting, set off down the airfield towing the glider, move as close to the tracks as you can. The wing tip holder will be on the airfield and the opposite wing of the glider will be overhanging the tracks and the adjoining field. Maintain a walking pace and frequently check behind that the wing tip holder is comfortable with the speed.

Once you are proceeding down the field towing the glider it is not necessary to stop for aircraft performing a normal approach and landing on the airfield. It is more important to clear the field as quickly as possible.



5. When you are abeam the launch point check that it is all clear on the approach and base legs, if so turn and move across the airfield to the launch point.

6. Take directions and position the glider on either winch or aerotow launch queues. Be extremely careful as you get close to other gliders not to drive over a wing tip or strike the top of the cab on a wing. The wing tip holder may start to turn the glider, stop at this point before the tow rope reaches an extreme angle to the nose of the glider while under tension.

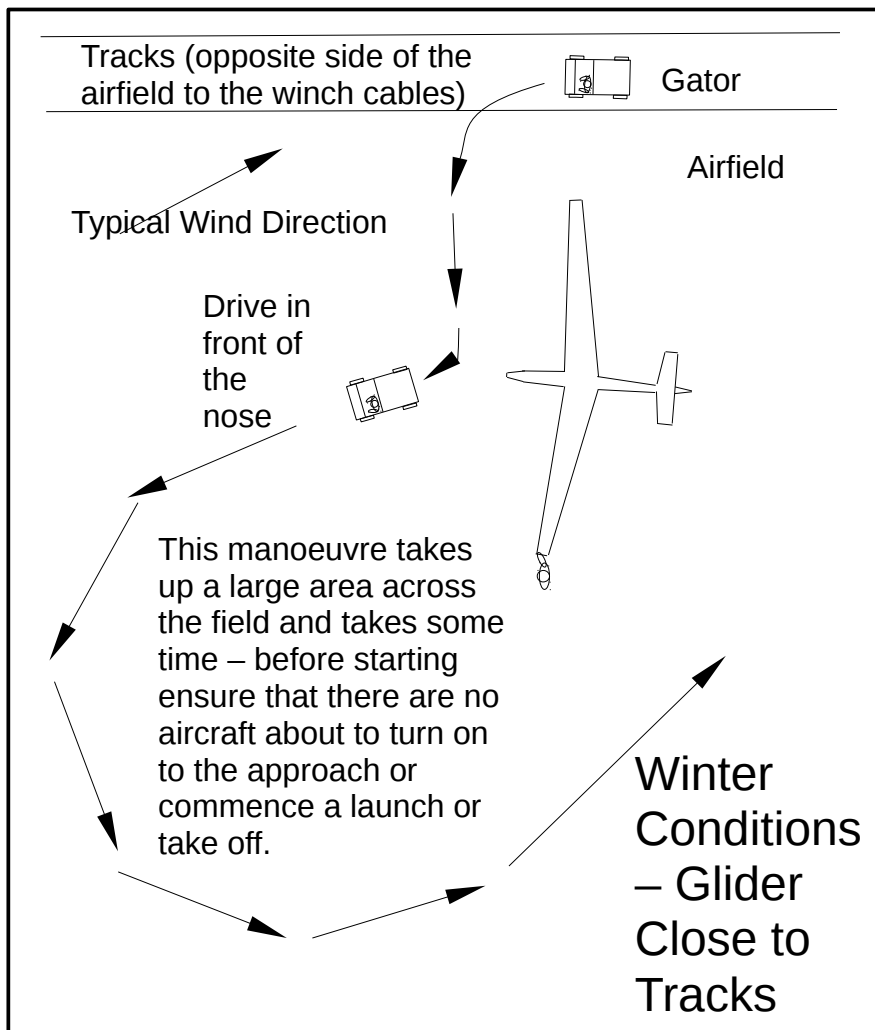
7. Once the glider has released, move the Gator a short distance, to allow the glider to be turned on to the line, and then stop. Place the rope in the hopper, jamming it in the jam cleat so that it cannot fall out. You can then move the Gator to the parking position and shut down.

Winter Conditions

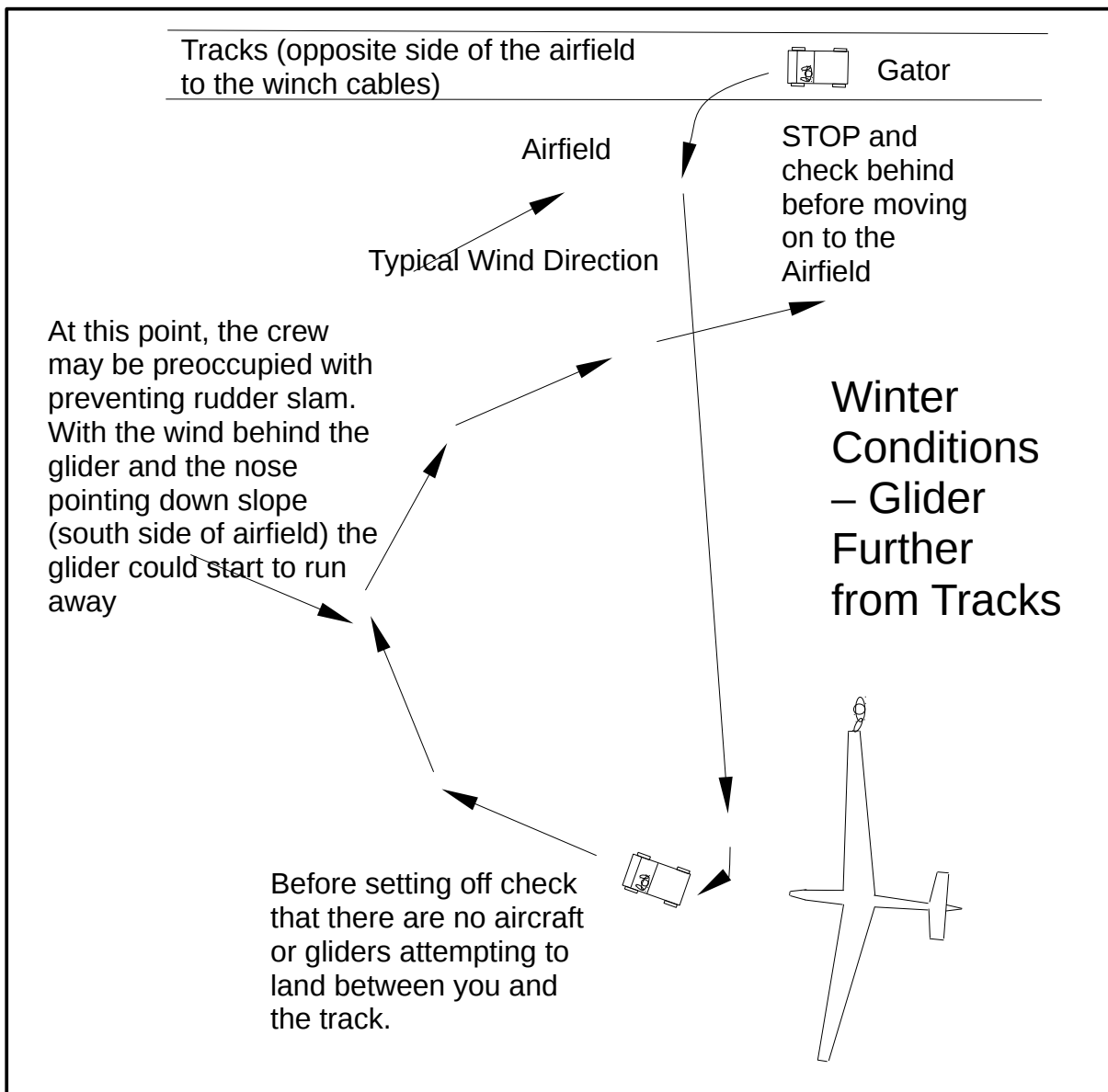
At some point during the winter the ground may get too soft to rotate gliders on the spot. The manoeuvre causes the glider to sink into the ground. Under these circumstances we have to adopt a different procedure to that described in step 3 in the previous section. These alternative procedures are potentially more hazardous and can introduce delays into the launching.

Position the Gator in front of the nose of the glider. Follow the instructions of the glider crew and perform either of the following manoeuvres:

1. If the glider has landed close to the track it will be necessary to turn through an arc of 180 degrees before moving back towards the track. The manoeuvre takes up a large area and takes some time, you must ensure that there are no aircraft about to turn on to the approach or commence a launch or take off. If there is any doubt – wait.



2. If the glider has landed further out in the field it may be necessary to perform the 180 degree arc towards the track. Check before climbing into the cab that there are no aircraft attempting to land between the glider and track. Be aware that, if it is windy, a two-seater glider crew may be preoccupied with preventing the rudder slamming. Also, when turning to the south in the middle of the field, the glider may be pointing downwind, down a gentle slope, and may start to run away. Take it very slowly, try to avoid slack developing in the rope, be aware of what is happening behind you and be ready to stop immediately.



5 Check List for Instructors

Before authorising a young driver under 16 to drive a Gator, and conduct retrieves, instructors must ensure that the following steps have been completed:

1. The candidate should have been assessed by a gliding instructor for their maturity and whether they are physically able to reach and operate the controls of the vehicle. The candidates record card (yellow) must be signed by an instructor to this effect;
 2. The candidates parents/guardian should be fully aware of the club policy regarding Young Drivers (Light Utility Vehicles), which is available on the club web-site, and signify their approval by signing the candidates record card (yellow);
 3. The above course material must have been delivered by a gliding instructor during practical demonstrations on the airfield;
 4. A final oral test should be conducted by an instructor that the candidate has received and understood the above training. In particular the safety aspects and restrictions;
 5. Finally, a gliding instructor should sign the candidates record card (yellow) to record that he/she is approved to drive the Gator.
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