

## How to find your instructor

You're new to the Club and to model flying and you're hoping to learn to fly. Will anyone be willing, or able, to show you how?

Well, the first thing to say is that you will quite likely be offered no end of advice or assistance by established Club members. After all, we are a friendly crowd and most of us like to chip in when help is sought. If this doesn't happen then ask. It's up to you to make the running.

You'll soon discover, however, that not everybody is giving the same advice. You may even get the impression that, if you ask the same question of five different members, you get five quite different answers. Don't be dismayed - this is how it is. You'll soon decide whose advice you want to take seriously.

So, who will you ask to instruct you?

The first thing to do is to watch people fly their models. You'll see all styles of flying, from staid to barnstorming. However, it's not the style that counts, it's the control of the plane. Ask yourself who seems to be in charge, the pilot or the plane? As a newcomer, it may take you a little while to suss this out. Also consider whether they fly in the way you'd like to be able to fly. For example, you may not be interested in aerobatics if you intend to fly scale models or gliders.

Ask around for advice. In each case ask yourself "Is he keen to answer the questions I'm asking or is he primarily concerned to convince me of how knowledgeable or skilful he is?" When you are choosing an instructor, this is probably the most important thing to consider.

There are some formal qualifications which may help you decide but, in any case, anybody who supervises your flying or instructs you must have held a BMFA A cert for at least 6 months, and be a regular flier. You may ask for instruction from anybody who qualifies in this way, irrespective of any other qualifications they may or may not hold. Some members have a B cert, which means they have been examined to a higher standard than the A cert holders. Also, the BMFA recognises two Instructor grades. There is the Club Instructor, nominated by the club, and the BMFA Instructor which requires certification by a BMFA examiner.

When you finally approach someone to ask if they are willing to teach you, there are one or two additional considerations. When are you available to come to the field, weekend, midweek in the daytime or evenings? Obviously your instructor must be able and willing to match this. If it's not too late now, find out what type of plane and equipment they prefer to use. In the early stages of training they will most likely be flying your model more than you are. Who is responsible if the plane crashes? Discuss the possibility of using a buddy lead - you may not like this but many learners like the security it gives. Could using a simulator help?

If you find you don't get on with your instructor, then change. You're not under any sort of formal contract.

Don't feel you necessarily have to commit to just one instructor. In model flying there are few hard and fast rules. Opinions differ on most things and it helps to get a range of viewpoints. In the end it's your plane you're going to fly and it's your judgement that counts.