

# Safe Skydiving is an Attitude

Skydiving is essentially a risk management sport. Every time we jump, we consciously or unconsciously weigh the risks against the rush of the jump. To improve our odds of staying alive to jump again we all need to practice “**safe skydiving**”. Safe skydiving is more of an attitude than one or two (or even dozens of) hard and fast rules. It’s knowing yourself, knowing your gear and being aware of what’s going on around you.

Every injury or fatality has been linked to a chain of events, or uncertainties, that led to the accident. The first step in preventing accidents is learning to recognise the uncertainties. This will allow you to evaluate the circumstances and make a decision based on the information you have, not just on your emotions.

Did you check your gear before you put it on? How about before you left the aeroplane? Could you have dislodged your main pin when you sat down in the aircraft or when you stood up on jump run? Did you take the time to locate all the handles on that rig you are borrowing? What about spotting? Are the ground wind speeds too strong for your canopy or your level of experience?

When you feel uncertain – about anything – take the time to find out what’s going on. Ask someone to give you a pin check, both on the ground and before exit. Know the wind speed before you get on the aeroplane. If the wind is too strong for you, don’t be afraid to sit out the jump.

When you were a student your instructors were responsible for making go and no-go decisions by a non-emotional evaluation of many things. You may have been disappointed when manifest announced that students were on a wind hold, but you understood that the decision was made with your safety in mind. Safe skydivers take the same responsibility for themselves. Safe skydivers evaluate the risk factors and make a decision based on their own capabilities, not their emotional drives.

Your go and no-go decisions should be based on your own limits. Be honest with yourself. Evaluate your abilities and limitations. Know your personal limits. As your skills and abilities increase you may find that you can expand your personal limits. Remember that what’s right for you is not necessarily right for someone else. Don’t push your friends to jump in conditions they are not comfortable with, and don’t allow them to talk you into busting your limits.

Learn all you can about your gear: how it works, how to maintain it properly and how your canopy flies in different conditions. Avoid over confidence, we are always learning. Those who feel they already know all they need are the most likely to be involved in an accident.

Most importantly a safe skydiver knows that no skydive is so important that it can’t be delayed or postponed until conditions are suitable. Don’t lose sight of your values and priorities in your rush to get to altitude.

