

The Care and Feeding of GPS Units

Pilots who know their GPS units well have a distinct advantage at winning races. For those who are new at this game, here are some suggestions.

BEFORE SIGNING IN:

Put your name on the GPS. Many look identical.

Install new batteries. It's amazing how fast a GPS eats batteries, especially when cold.

Delete all saved tracklogs. This makes manual scoring much easier, if necessary.

Delete all waypoints. This way the competition waypoints won't be confused with any others.

Configure the interface protocol to Garmin if possible, NMEA otherwise.

AT THE SIGN-IN STATION:

You will be given a pilot number, and the competition waypoints will be downloaded to your GPS.

ON LAUNCH, BEFORE FLYING:

Turn on the GPS. It sounds silly, but some people forget.

Verify that the track log is turned on. Also consider the track log configuration. Should it wrap when full? How often should points be recorded? Most "reasonable" settings will be fine, but the best settings depend on several factors. If in doubt, discuss this with a GPS guru.

Tie the GPS to your glider or harness, in a location with a clear view of the sky. If you can see the GPS in flight, that can help a lot. A layer of fabric won't matter, so it can be placed inside a harness pocket on your back, but not on your chest.

Note: It is probably best not to define and use a route, since routes can behave in unanticipated ways, and the risk of confusion is greater than the potential benefit. Instead, some pilots write the task on masking tape affixed to their basetubes.

AFTER COMPLETING THE COURSE:

Turn off the GPS as soon as convenient. When it's turned on, it's recording tracklog data you don't need. In some cases, it could over-write the tracklog data of your winning flight.

Turn in your GPS to the scoring desk promptly. It's to your advantage to give the scoring guys as much time as possible to solve any problems that might come up.