

10 Towing Tips

1. Towing is really good FUN...its challenging...making it efficient..getting the glider to good lift and getting back on the ground in the shortest time (least cost) and doing lots of landings, sometimes in challenging conditions. If it ever stops being fun...stop...as you may be at a limit...it could be you, the airplane or the environment or a combination of any...but STOP and sort it out.
2. Know your aircraft and take time if changing between types. Regardless of what towplane you are in, practise locating and operating the tow release with one hand on the stick and your free / throttle hand going for the release WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.
3. Towing is fatiguing...both on you and your aeroplane. Keep yourself well hydrated and nourished. Keep the plane clean, well fuelled and oiled. Don't accept running below reserve fuel...resist that temptation and pressure to give one more tow if you are tired or low on fuel...the last guy on the grid...going on task...must launch or his chance is blown... RESIST and go and get fuel when you need it.
4. Keep a bloody good lookout and listen-out...don't rely on gliders seeing and avoiding you. Keep your windscreen clean... a soft rag and a bit of spit whenever you get a chance between tows can do the trick.
5. Know where your slipstream is and where your rope is tracking as you position for a tow...don't blow dust over gliders or cause a canopy to be slammed closed.
6. Approach a glider from an angle that allows you to eyeball the glider pilot...you need to know who you are towing and what they are in...student/ace/ballasted/starts tow with brakes out? They need to know who you are; it personalises the process...and they will know who to thank and shout a beer for when they get back from a great flight.
7. Don't tolerate a "slingshotter". Let them know such acts are dangerous and unacceptable. One warning...if not heeded, don't tow them again.
8. Be ready for an upset...it might come from gusty thermals, turbulence, a student over controlling, an ace having a bad day...whatever...if you ever reach a control stop...**Release them**...no hesitation...regardless of how low you are. No glider pilot has died from being dumped off a tow. At least 2 tow pilots have died in NZ from not dumping the glider in an upset situation ...and several have had very lucky escapes.
9. When things go wrong...a signal or calling a rego may not help...calling a name will "Pete...close your brakes" may register better than "Charlie Charlie close your brakes"
10. A landing is not complete till you are stopped...all might be going sweet till you get a gust, an undulation, a bounce...whether it be a wheeler or a 3 pointer...keep flying it till you are stopped. Go around if in doubt. And remember...every landing will be watched and judged... by the time keepers, the guys on the grid waiting to get the rope, the pilot waiting for the tow...the casual watchers...

No pressure...just don't stuff up the landing!