

LOCAL AIRSPACE

Aim: To learn the basics of NZ Airspace with a focus on local airspace used for gliding.

Whenever we are airbourne, we are in some form of airspace. It will be either Uncontrolled Airspace or Controlled Airspace. As a pilot, we must learn what conditions and responsibilities we have when using each type of airspace.

Uncontrolled Airspace. This is airspace that is free of control by any Air Traffic Control (ATC) service. Pilots are free to fly where they like provided they comply with some basic *rules of the air* to ensure the safety of all who use the airspace. The rules are common sense and provide guidance on what weather conditions are suitable and acceptable for operating in this airspace. They specify the distance you must stay clear of cloud and the in-flight visibility you need to ensure you can see other aircraft (and terrain / objects) to manoeuvre clear of them if required. We call this operating in a “see and be seen” environment.

Controlled Airspace. This airspace is established to allow Air Traffic Control services to control aircraft, commonly called “*traffic*”, around airports and the airways between them. There are two main types of controlled airspace; Control Zones (CTRs) and Control Areas (CTAs).

Control Zones are associated with aerodrome operations and are the only controlled airspace that extends from ground level to a specific upper limit (height).

Control Areas extend from a specified lower limit to an upper limit and are further divided into Terminal Control Areas (TMAs), Upper Control Areas (UTAs) and Oceanic Control Areas...but we won't worry about this last one as we usually confine our gliding to over land and not out to sea!!

TMAs are established around one or more aerodromes and are designed to encompass the flight paths of controlled flights in to and out of the airfield. All our major airports have these.

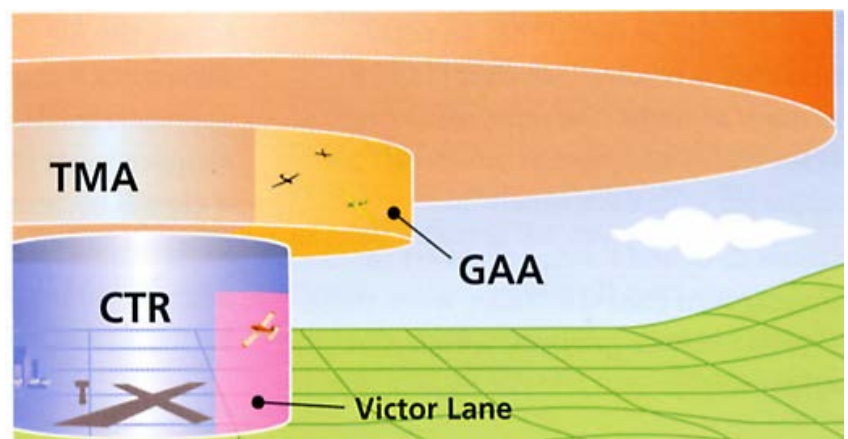
UTAs are designed to encompass higher altitude airspace used by aircraft operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) as they fly to/from and between airports.

Gliders tend to try and avoid controlled airspace but when we can't or our airfield is slap bang near a big airport, we may have a General Aviation Area (GAA) established that effectively allows us to operate uncontrolled within specified lateral and vertical boundaries within the CTR and TMA as appropriate. A number of clubs have these GAAs and liaise with ATC to open / activate their GAA for when they wish to go flying...and deactivate / close it when finished for the day.

In general, to operate in controlled airspace, you need to know the boundaries of it and the rules that apply. There are further classifications of Controlled Airspace that we can look at later in your training. You will need a radio to operate in most controlled airspace and possibly a transponder...and of course, you will need to know how to use them correctly.

This shows the different types of airspace near an airport. The CTR goes from ground level up to say 3000 ft, then above that is the larger TMA. Part of the TMA is designated as a GAA to allow gliders to fly in it without having to be controlled.

Your Instructor will describe the types of airspace at and near your gliding airfield and tell you the rules for operating in it. As you gain experience, you will learn more about operating further afield and in different types of airspace.



Need To Know:

- The airspace and rules for flying from your training site.

Further Reading / Reference Material:

- CAA Good Aviation Booklet (GAP) NZ Airspace. Excellent overview of NZ airspace.
- Maps depicting local airspace