

Getting into the Hobby of Flying Remote Controlled Aircraft *by Nigel Watson*

When you decide you want to learn how to fly remote controlled fixed wing aircraft, it's important that you read this article first so that you don't make any impulse purchases concerning the type of aircraft and associated radio control equipment.

Many of us would like to fly a WW2 fighter aircraft for your first plane, but this would be a mistake because this type of aircraft requires you to have fast reflexes and a quick eye to keep it in the air. You will gain these skills as you progress from high-wing trainer aircraft, to low wing sport planes, and then onto the faster war planes, and EDF jets, if you so wish.

To be successful in this sport, you should consider joining a local RC club which has a training program for student pilots, such as Diablo Valley Radio Controllers (DVRC). Go visit the club and talk to some of the members to understand what equipment would set you on the right path for success as an RC pilot.

Do not be tempted to buy an All Ready to Fly BNF (Bind-N-Fly) foam trainer that includes everything you need to fly, in one package because it may be a waste of money. This type of packaged deal generally includes the plane, a low-end cost transmitter, and a battery charger. Most times, the transmitter is somewhat basic and generally, has no programming capability. Furthermore, these types of transmitters don't usually have a trainer port either. Trainer ports allow the student pilot to connect his/her transmitter to the instructor's transmitter so when the student gets into difficulties, while learning to fly, the instructor can intervene and take over the control of the aircraft. That way you are save the embarrassment of crashing your plane, and also the associated costs of losing the aircraft.

I have included a couple of examples of the type of trainer that you should consider purchasing and have also approximated the cost of such planes. One type is a balsa and plywood ARF trainer and the other is a foam Plug-N-Play (PNP) ARF trainer aircraft. The PNP part means you must supply your own receiver and motor battery.

Finally, don't be tempted to buy a small trainer aircraft because small planes are more easily affected by gusts of wind and your reactions will have to be quick to keep them in the air. Therefore, aim for a wingspan of around 4 to 5 feet. It is much easier to see a larger plane in the sky.

If you follow the above suggestions towards your goal of flying solo, you will gradually improve your skills to fly more advanced models, while minimizing your overall costs.

Whichever type of plane you choose, please read (and re-read) the instructions before assembly.

Balsa and Plywood ARF Kit

There are many trainers that you can buy of this type ARF, ranging in price from \$150 and up. However, you will need some simple skills, adhesives, and tools to put this aircraft together because these kits are usually comprised of component parts such as wings, fuselage (body), and tail that need to be glued together. In addition, the radio gear (receiver, servos, and battery) needs to be fitted as well as the electric motor and Electronic Speed Control (ESC). You will also likely need to add the items listed in the Table below to complete the aircraft and get it into a flying condition.

Foam (PNP) ARF Trainer

Two great choices of starter planes are the E-flite Apprentice PNP and the Freewing Pandora PNP. The latter can be configured from a high wing trainer to a low wing trainer, all within the same kit.

It is quite common for these types of aircraft to have minimal assembly time and generally, all that is needed is a small screwdriver to join the fuselage, wings, and tail together.

Materials for Balsa/Ply ARF Trainer

Materials	Cost	Qty	Total
Balsa/Ply Trainer Aircraft Kit	\$ 300.00	1	\$ 300.00
Transmitter, Spektrum 6 ch.	\$ 250.00	1	\$ 250.00
Spektrum Receiver AR620	\$ 50.00	1	\$ 50.00
LiPo Battery: 3S	\$ 25.00	3	\$ 75.00
Electronic Speed Control (ESC)	\$ 70.00	1	\$ 70.00
Electric Motor	\$ 80.00	1	\$ 80.00
Servos: 2 Ail, 1 Elev, 1 Rudd	\$ 15.00	4	\$ 60.00
Propellers	\$ 10.00	2	\$ 20.00
Pushrods: 2 Ail, 1 Elev, 1 Rudd	\$ 5.00	4	\$ 20.00
Servo Extension, 2 Ail	\$ 9.00	2	\$ 18.00
Y Harness	\$ 9.00	1	\$ 9.00
Thin CA glue	\$ 8.00	1	\$ 8.00
Medium CA glue	\$ 8.00	1	\$ 8.00
30 min Epoxy glue	\$ 12.00	1	\$ 12.00
Charging system for LiPo Batts.	\$ 100.00	1	\$ 100.00
Total			\$ 1,080.00

Materials for Foam ARF PNP (Plug N Play) Trainer

Materials	Cost	Qty	Total
Foam Trainer Aircraft	\$ 300.00	1	\$ 300.00
Transmitter, Spektrum 6 ch.	\$ 250.00	1	\$ 250.00
Spektrum Receiver AR620	\$ 50.00	1	\$ 50.00
LiPo Battery: 3S	\$ 25.00	3	\$ 75.00
ESC, supplied			\$ 0.00
Electric Motor: supplied			\$ 0.00
Servos, supplied			\$ 0.00
Props: usually 1 supplied			\$ 0.00
Pushrods: supplied			\$ 0.00
Servo Extension: supplied			\$ 0.00
Y Harness: supplied			\$ 0.00
Charging system for LiPo Batts.	\$ 100.00	1	\$ 100.00
Total			\$ 775.00