

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO LAND A HANG GLIDER IN A WIND SHEAR

A wind gradient or “shear” is the boundary between two air masses moving at different velocities. The shear will stall the glider or produce extreme turbulence, making it difficult to control. Regain control by increasing speed, which will increase airflow across the sail (the flexible skin of the glider, also called the “wing”).

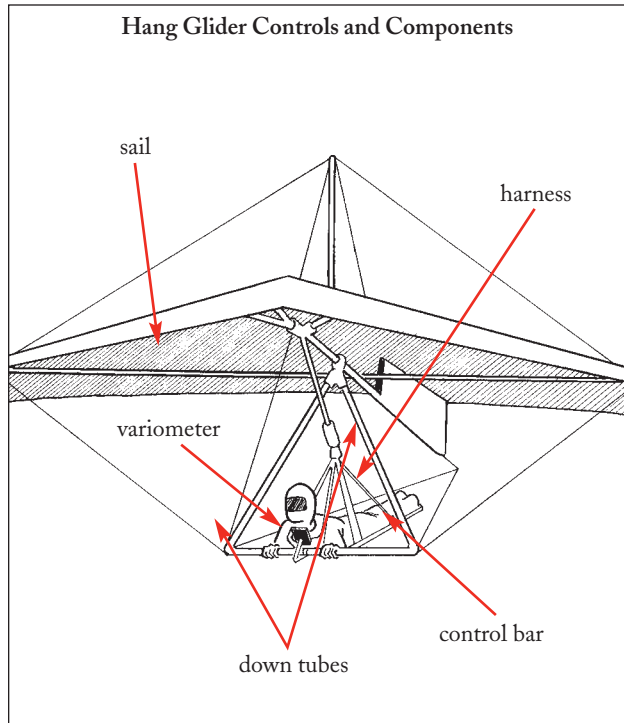
- 1 Pull in on the control bar so the nose of the glider tilts toward the ground.**
- 2 Shift your weight forward.**
This will increase your velocity as you glide toward the ground.
- 3 Monitor your altitude.**
Your variometer (a small computer strapped to the control bar) indicates your altitude in feet. You will probably be at a few thousand feet, descending quickly.
- 4 Monitor your airspeed.**
Check the variometer for your speed. Your “VNE” (velocity never to exceed) on a hang glider is about 50 mph. If you are accelerating rapidly and approaching the glider’s limits, pull back on the control bar slightly to bring the nose up and gain a bit more lift.

5 Unzip your harness.

As you approach an altitude of 500 feet, unzip your harness so you are no longer in the prone position. Your legs will be hanging down at a slight angle.

6 Position your hands on the down tubes.

As the glider approaches an altitude of 40 feet, move your hands from the horizontal section of the control bar to the down tubes, which are connected to either side of the bar.



7 Flare the sail.

Push the control bar forward with a smooth, fast motion. The hang glider's nose will pitch up. As the sail angle changes, the air between it and the ground will become compressed and act as an air brake to slow you down.

8 Land in a standing position.

The glider will have slowed sufficiently to make a stand-up landing possible. As your feet touch the ground, begin a slow run to maintain control and keep the sail from pitching forward suddenly. If the glider frame has wheels, use them to absorb some of the force of the impact.

9 Come to a stop.

The glider should settle gently to the ground.

Be Aware

- Many hang glider pilots wear a parachute on their chest to use if they are caught in dangerous turbulence or in a severe updraft that sends the glider above 10,000 feet.
- Carry a lightweight package of dental floss for use in an emergency, tree-based landing. When stuck in the tree, hold one end of the floss and toss the dispenser to rescuers. Instruct them to tie their end of the floss to a rope. Use the floss to pull the rope up, tie off, and climb down.