

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR EXPENSIVE CUSHION
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Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Allen Silver. I've been jumping for over 40 years and have 3100+ jumps. I'm a Master Rigger, a DPRE (Designated Parachute Rigger Examiner) for the FAA. I'm past chairman of the rigging committee for PIA (Parachute Industry Association), which represents the parachute industry worldwide. I also have a parachute loft in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Now that I have the introduction out of the way, what does that have to do with your parachute? **A LOT!!!** Before you take your parachute to the closest, most conveniently located individual for repacking, find out who they are. Ask pertinent questions like: Have you ever packed this type of chute before and if so how many? Do you have the current manuals? And maybe the most important, ask yourself do you trust and feel comfortable with this person? You should select your parachute rigger like you would select a doctor, with **CARE**.

My customers come first in my business. It does me no good to pack their chute if they don't understand how to preflight and put it on. How to egress their particular type of aircraft, and how to pull the ripcord, steer the parachute and finally land and recover.

How many of you put your parachute on inside your aircraft? Did you know in case of an emergency that people have undone seatbelts and parachutes in their haste to get out? Just like an escape route for your home in case of an emergency, an escape plan for your aircraft could save your life. The time to decide what to do is not after you have a emergency, but beforehand. Preplanning means you'll react swiftly and correctly with minimum loss of time and altitude. Practicing your egress procedures before and after each flight will help to reduce your bailout time by over 50%. **Practice, Practice, Practice....**

There are other factors that often determine if you'll make it out with time and altitude to spare. The older style military chutes are the right price, usually cheap, but their weight can be a factor in your egress. A 30-pound seat or back style parachute can weight 150 to 300 pounds or more, if you've lost a wing and are tumbling or spinning out of control pulling 5 + G's. Try moving with that kind of weight strapped to you.

The lightweight chutes of today will generally fit into any aircraft and distribute the weight over a larger area and subject you to less than half the weight of their earlier dinosaurs. This alone will enhance your chances of egress. They're also steerable upon opening allowing you to avoid life threatening obstacles **first** and then face into the wind on landing.

Let's face it though unless you're an accomplished skydiver you'll can expect to sustain some kind of injury on landing, but you'll survive to fly again. Your chances of survival also will depend on your mental attitude. You must realize an out-of-control aircraft affords you little if any safety and you're not likely survive a crash. However, your parachute packed by someone you trust will work, if used properly. Preflight your thinking as well as your aircraft and parachute. Remember, **Practice, Practice and Practice** your egress procedures before and after each flight.

A good time to learn about your parachute and how to properly put it on is when you take it to your parachute rigger. You say you UPS it to them. Well put it on and run through a practice drill. Start first with the jettisoning of your door or canopy. Next and very important is your seatbelt. **Do not** release them first or you may find yourself pinned against the aircraft and cannot jettison the door or canopy. The seatbelt is there to hold you in place until your ready to leave. Next crawl, claw, or do whatever it takes to get free of your aircraft. Now your attention goes to finding the ripcord. It should be marked with a bright colored tape like red or yellow for easier visibility.

If you wear glasses to fly, take them off before your practice. because in an actual emergency the wind will do it for you. You might consider carrying a spare pair on you or in a waist pack, if your eyesight is poor. If would be ashamed if you survived the bailout , but could not see the impending powerlines you were heading towards.

Now that you're outside and tumbling out of control how long do you wait? This depends on how high you are. If you're not sure, pull about one second after clearing your aircraft. If you know you are several thousand feet (AGL) above the ground, waiting three or four seconds before pulling the ripcord will probably help distance you from your aircraft. Then if you remember, put your legs together to prevent the chute from deploying between them, and **most importantly**, your eyes should be actively looking for the ripcord. You may have only one chance to pull it and you want to make sure you get it the first time.

Generally I tell my customers to grasp the ripcord with their right hand and place the left hand on top of it with your thumb around the handle. **Do not** pull across your chest because your muscles are weaker this direction, but push hard straight out in front of you. This will clear the ripcord from the pocket and will utilize your muscles to the maximum. If any ripcord cable remains in the housing, pull it free with either hand and throw the ripcord away to

prevent it from entangling with your deploying chute. Do not try to get stable like a skydiver before pulling. This will be almost impossible to do if you are not an accomplished skydiver. The parachute will know up from down.

If you want to practice pulling the ripcord, pull it in front of your rigger or at home before you ship them your parachute. You'll have an edge on those who never become familiar with their **expensive cushion**. Look at, or have your rigger explain how the parachute steers. If you pull the chute at home, make sure it falls on a clean surface like a bed or couch. Carefully bag it up in the carrying bag or a plastic bag before shipping it. Keep the lines away from the hook portion of Velcro. They can snag the lines and do serious damage to them. Don't forget the ripcord or other parts that may have fallen out when you pulled the ripcord. Now you'll have reviewed your emergency procedures and your parachute rigger cannot be accused of not packing your chute. A note of caution: Do not pull the ripcord near your fine china or other breakables. The spring loaded pilot chute can fly a long way.

Trying to read this article is no substitute for having an experienced parachute rigger show you first hand how your equipment works. Ask your fellow pilots who they use and are they happy with that person. Most of my customers come to me by referral and that's by far the best way. Try looking in the phone book, call your local office of the FAA or contact a local skydiving center for help.

A little more about my experience -- 17 of my 25 years in the California Air National Guard were spent maintaining parachutes and other types of survival equipment. I've assisted in rewriting two parachute technical manuals for the Air Force. In my business (Silver Parachute Sales & Service) I maintain parachutes for over 700 glider and aerobatic pilots. For over 17 years I've been a dealer for the Softie line of pilot emergency parachutes, manufactured by Para-Phernalia Inc. I'm often called upon to give safety seminars all over the United States and can be reached by calling (510) 785-7070. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call me Monday-Friday 8:30am - 5pm (PST). Or write me at P.O. Box 6092, Hayward, CA 94544. I can also be reached by going to my website at: www.SilverParachutes.com or email me at: Allen@SilverParachutes.com .

Thank you, Allen Silver