EL TORBELLINO

NEWSLETTER OF SAN DIEGO ORBITEERS FREE FLIGHT CLUB

September 2026

The Prez's Corner *– Don Bartick*

Aah! It's September and the post summer start of the contest season at Lost Hills, CA on the Lost Hills Free Flight Model Airfield. Lost Hills is 270 miles north of San Diego. This mile square property was purchased by multi-millionaire John Crean, owner of Fleetwood Enterprises, manufacturers of the Fleetwood RV. He was an avid model free flight flyer who flew in many contests at the Taft, CA field used by Southern CA Free Flight clubs. This field was surrounded by a Kitty Litter factory and a Prison. Even so, many major contests were held on this field, including the US Free Flight Championships. When the field at Taft, CA became unflyable due to expansion of industry in the area, John took it upon himself to acquire the Lost Hills property in the early 2000's. An association was created and named the Lost Hills Free Flight Model Airfield Association. John then made provisions in his 'Will' that the property would be managed by the Association and remain in the Association for in perpetuity as long as it was used for Free Flight. This field is the mecca for free flight on the West coast.

With all this said, the next contest at Lost Hills is the US Free Flight Championships, September 25-27. Mid-October has a couple FAI contests and then November 13-15 is the Dual-clubs Free Flight Bonanza. This event is comprised of 2 club annuals. The SD Orbiteers and the Fresno Gas Model clubs. It will be the 67th and 86th annuals respectively. I am the Contest Director. The weather at this time of the year is cool with minimal winds. Even though this is our club annual, very few local San Diego Orbiteers attend. I sure would like that to change. Do you hear me!

We had a chance last month to experience flying on the Perris Taibi field since it was plowed. Parking wasn't an issue. Chasing flights was little more difficult for us old guys. Overall, it's doable for now. If crops are planted, the chase difficulty will ramp up. Time will tell. Remember, we would be flying there at our own risk.

Once again, SDSU Gary Fogel's AE123 class will be needing volunteers for timing student flights of rubber powered free flights at Project Day, Wednesday November 18th. They will be flying mainly AMA Alphas and Betas. The event is from 1pm to 3pm. Prior to this date there will be a Trimming Day on Saturday, October 3rd from 8am to 10am on the soccer field. This is new. An opportunity to teach the students how to set up and trim their planes. If you can volunteer for either or both events, please email me at dbartick@4-warddesign.com.

I want to continue nagging our members to seriously consider Indoor Free Flight. The venue is the Los Coaches Creek Middle School in El Cajon. Indoors has perfect weather, short chases and great competition. Shortfall: we need more participants to help defer the costs. Next Indoor session is scheduled for October 4th. Competed events are Catapult Glider and FAC Jet Catapult.

That's a wrap.

Remember: "Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do them." - *Lou Holtz*

-Bruce Lee

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ORBITEERS MEMBERSHIP DUES

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Lifetime Membership - $250
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Submit Dues to Club Treasurer:
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THE FINE PRINT THE FINE PRINT

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2027 Wright Stuff and Elastic Launched Glider Science Olympiad Events
By Mike Jester

The Science Olympiad Wright Stuff (WS) and Elastic Launched Glider (ELG) events return again for the 2027 season. As many of you know, I have regularly coached both these Science Olympiad (SO) events over the past twenty years. I was even the Southern California and National Fight Event Supervisor in the past. The rubber powered event was called Wright Stuff for decades and for a few years was called the Flight Event after I successfully had the rules amended to require that the models fit in a box of stated dimensions. This was done to eliminate tedious and potentially hazardous measurement of wingspan and chord, prop, stab, etc. dimensions at check-in, increase design creativity, and provide for safe transport of models. This year the rubber powered event returns to its traditional name of Wright Stuff. SDO members may be contacted for coaching advice on both events. In the past our club has invited students to come to our indoor flying events to receive coaching advice. However, I understand from Don Bartick that we may not be able to allow non-adults to utilize the Los Coches Creek Middle School gym due to insurance issues. You may be able to coach a student in the gym of the school that the student attends. While in-person coaching is far preferable, I remotely coached the Division B gold medalist to the gold medal in the Flight Event at the 2023 National tournament. I cc'd all communications to the student's mother, and I exchanged many emails and videos.

The 2027 WS event is in Division C for high school students. It is very similar to many of the previous WS and Flight events. The 2027 WS event requires a rubber powered model airplane to fit into a box of prescribed dimensions in its flight configuration. The model must weigh a minimum of 8 grams excluding the weight of the rubber motor which may not exceed 1.5 grams. A team's Flight Score is based on the longer of two official flights.



2015 San Diego Regional Gold Medal Winning WS Model and Team Coached by Mike Jester
(there was no length limit on the model that year)

The 2027 ELG event is in Division B for middle school students. It is very similar to the prior ELG events. This year the glider must fit in a box of prescribed dimensions in its flight configuration. There is a "more than 3.5 gram" minimum weight limit. The launch handle must be less than one meter in any orientation, completely supported by one student, and be safe. There are no other restrictions on the launch handle. So, a launch handle 99 cm in length with a built-in pull gauge (ruler) and built-in inclinometers for measuring azimuth and roll angles would be both legal and beneficial for middle school students.

There is a tiny hope that a few of the tens of thousands of students that will compete in the 2027 WS and ELG events across the nation will go on to participate in the adult free flight hobby. Indeed Kang Lee, a three-time world F1D champion, got his start in free flight coaching the WS event for his daughter's school. I first got exposed to free flight coaching the WS event for my daughter's school circa 2005, after personally giving up flying NORTH PACIFIC rubber powered models and gliders around age 12. No other parent apparently had any experience with free flight. Thankfully, John Hutchison came to the rescue at the time and patiently coached my daughter, and mentored me at the same time, in indoor rubber powered free flight.



John Hutchison with Julie Jester Wearing Her Gold Medals
Won in the 2005 San Diego Regional and Southern California State WS Events

Orbiteers



San Diego Orbiteers
Flying Schedule 2026
Taibi Field Perris, Ca

Primary Date	Rain Date	Event
August 16	Aug 23	P-30/Glider/Power
September	25-28	**Free Flight Championships, Lost Hills, Ca**
September 20	September 27	Coupe/Glider/Power
October 18	October 25	NOS/OT/Glider/Power
November	13,14&15	**Dual Clubs, Lost Hill, Ca**
November 22	November 29	P-30/Glider/Power
December 13	No Date	Make-up

MP
12/25

SDO Monthly August - 2026

P-30
Stan
Don
David
John M

HLG
Chris
Stan
John M

Power
Mike P
Stan





Photos by Ariline Bartick

AMA Alpha Flight Trimming Guide



Background

The center of gravity (CG) of a plane is the point at which it can be balanced. By balancing the wing on your fingertips on the point shown in the illustration below, you can find the center of gravity. A simple example this type of balance is a teeter-totter, like the one on the school ground. Pilots of full-scale as well as model aircraft must correctly determine the CG before flight to ensure that the airplane is balanced. To fly any aircraft safely, flight control surfaces (ailerons, elevators, rudder) must be capable of providing effective control of a carefully balanced plane in order to maintain level flight.

The CG can be adjusted by placing clay or other weight on the nose or tail of the aircraft. Placing weight on the nose moves the CG forward. This causes the plane to be more stable and the plane should tend to fly in straight and level manner. Moving the CG to the rear has the effect of making the plane less stable. Between these two extremes is an appropriate location for the CG to maximize duration and distance, typically ¼ of the way back from the leading edge of the wing.

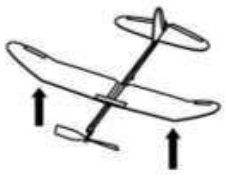
Your Alpha comes with a unique design system that allows you to move the wing back and forth on the fuselage to change the location of the CG rather than adding weight to the nose or tail. Experiment with different wing placement. adjusting the CG, to maximize duration or distance.

Finding the CG

You will be working with a partner to wind the motor and fly the plane to determine how changing the center of gravity affects the flight of the ALPHA. Follow the steps below.



1) As noted in the assembly instructions, position the wing about 10 centimeters (cm) from the nose of the plane.



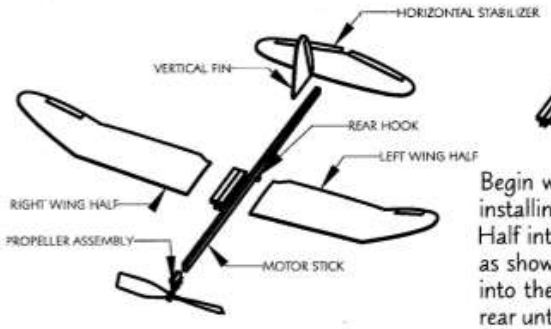
2) Use your fingers to support your plane at the end of each wing a little way back from the front edge (about ¼ of the way back). Doing this will give you a good starting point.

3)Move the wing clip forward a little and try again. Which way did the nose move? Is the plane nose heavy or tail heavy? Move the wing clip back a little and try again. Was the plane nose heavy or tail heavy? Move the wing clip until the plane rests level on your fingertips.

4) Wind the rubber motor and launch your airplane. Time its flight.

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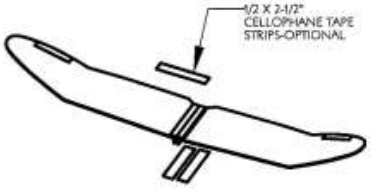
AMA Alpha Assembly and Flying Instructions



AMA Alpha Exploded View
These are the main parts of the AMA Alpha. It can easily be assembled simply by following these instructions!



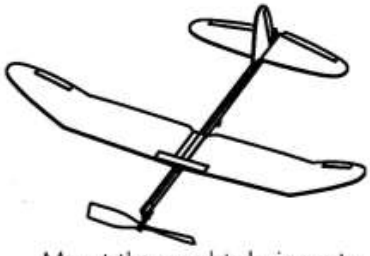
Begin wing assembly by installing the Left Wing Half into the Wing Saddle as shown. Slide the wing into the saddle from the rear until the leading edges are flush with the front of the saddle.



Next, assemble the Right Wing Half into the Wing Saddle in the same manner. Note that both wingtips are pointing upward to create an aerodynamic feature which will keep your model stable as it flies. As an option for permanent wing installation, strips of tape can be applied after assembly as shown.



To assemble the tail, slide the Horizontal Stabilizer into the slot on the rear of the Motor Stick. Note the oreintation of the small control tabs. Install the Verical Fin into the slot in the top of the Motor Stick. These parts can also be permanently secured with cellophane tape as an option.

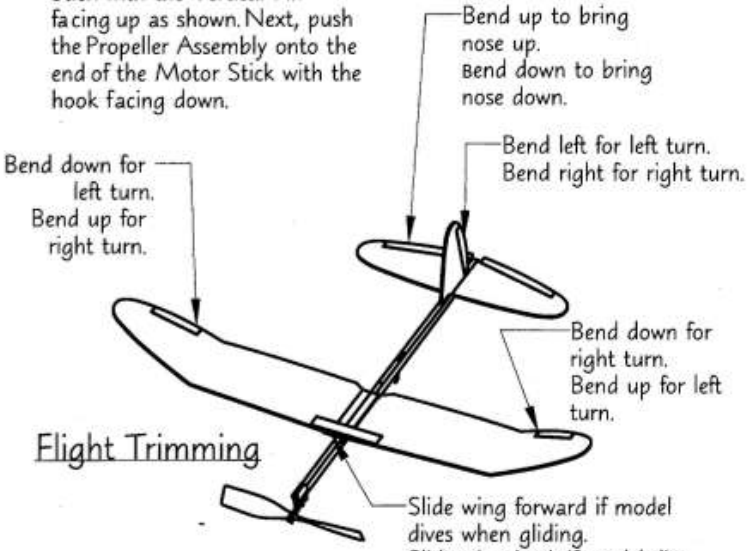


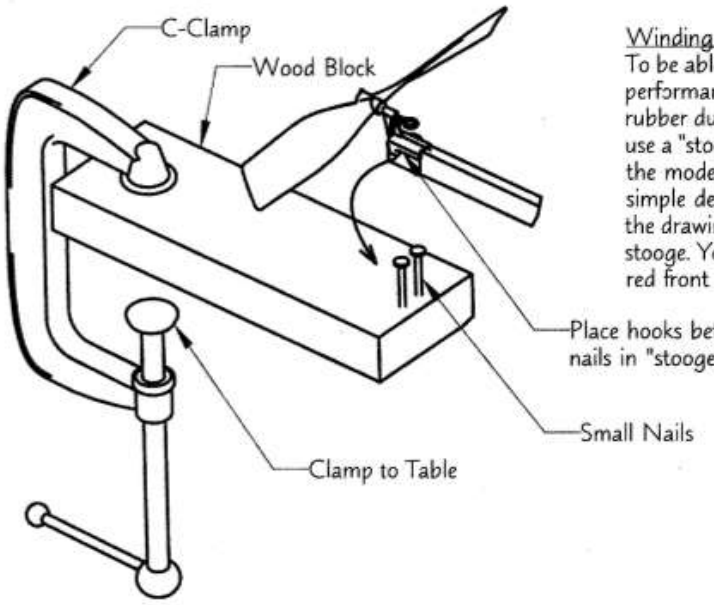
Mount the completed wing onto the Motor Stick by pushing the Wing Saddle over the Motor Stick with the Vertical Fin facing up as shown. Next, push the Propeller Assembly onto the end of the Motor Stick with the hook facing down.



Position the front of the wing about 4" behind the Propeller Assembly. This should place the Balance Point of the model near the middle of the wing. The position of the wing will be fine-tuned during Flight Trimming.

Flight Trimming





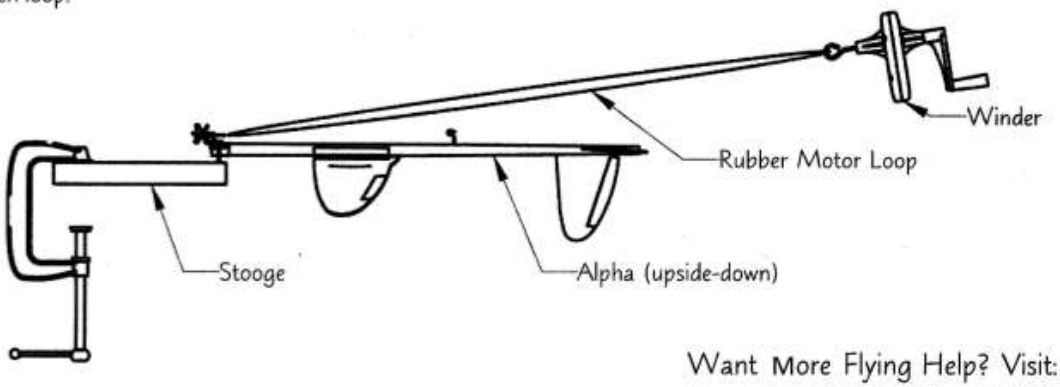
Winding Stooge

To be able to wind your ALPHA to maximize performance, you will need to stretch the rubber during winding. To do this you will use a "stooge". This is either a person holding the model as you stretch and wind or a simple device you can make yourself. Look at the drawings and see the options for the stooge. You can see the built-in hooks on the red front bearing.

AMA ALPHA

Winding tips

Your ALPHA is supplied with 80 inches of 3/32 contest rubber. For initial testing, we recommend you make a motor that is 12 inches (as a loop,24 inches of rubber) This will be your trim testing motor. You can put a very small dot of super glue on your end knot to keep the motor from coming loose. You will also need to lubricate your motors using a silicone grease or commercial "Armor All"-type car tire dressing. Using the noted drawing and winding stooge of your choice, start by putting about 35 clockwise winds of the handle on your 20-1 ratio winder (that will be 700 turns in the rubber band!). This is enough to get an idea of how your model is flying. Use the trim tabs on the model to get a flight pattern that is circular using all the winds. From this point, you can make motors of longer lengths and continue the flight testing. As a basic reference, you could expect to get around 750 turns in the 12-inch loop, 1300 in a 14-inch loop and 1800 turns in a 16-inch loop.



Trimming tips

Refer to the drawing on the previous page indicating the various trim tabs. If model is turning too much in one direction you can alter this by using the tabs on the wings or on the Vertical Fin. If your model is stalling, meaning the nose keeps dipping up and down during the glide, then move the wing back on the Motor Stick.

Want More Flying Help? Visit:

AMA FLIGHT SCHOOL

amaflightschool.org

THE AMA ALPHA FLIGHT INSTRUCTIONS - Via M.Jester

SDO members annually help SDSU students in an introductory aeronautical engineering course. The project in that course is for students to assemble, trim, and fly a model airplane of their choice on what they call the Project Day. The object is to obtain the longest flight time outdoors on a soccer field. Most of these students build and fly the AMA Alpha slide together model airplane. The preceding AMA Alpha flight instructions should help all involved in supporting the SDSU students. Typically SDO members go to the Project Day and time the student's flights. These instructions come with the AMA Alpha kit.

A picture of the AMA Alpha model is shown here:



FROM THE WORKBENCH - J.Merrill

I don't know about you, but my building seems to go in phases. Sometimes I get into cutting and gluing, and typically have several models going at the same time.

Sometimes I let the bones sit, and get into tissue covering older projects. Sometimes I just don't do any of it, especially on our recent 100+ degree days!

Right now I'm in a tissue phase. While some projects are on the back burner, I've taken up 3 relatively recent planes to cover.

The blue is an F6F Hellcat, which was supposed to be done last month. Life happens.
The white and bare bones closest to the bottom of the picture is a Mr. Mulligan, 1930's racing plane. It's the second one I've built, hoping this one will fly, unlike the first one! I don't know why I'm trying this one again, other than I really love the history of the plane. The greenish one is a peanut scale P-47. It's actually done, just needed a place to sit.

Finally, I've been procrastinating finishing up the cream-colored Chambermaid. I just haven't figured out the multiple compound curves yet …tissue doesn't like that! I'm sure I'll get it eventually. I need to convince myself that I'm smarter than the tissue.



My apologies that my "workbench" is a very messy card table, but at least it's a semi-organized mess.

That's it for this month.
So, what's on your workbench?

San Diego Orbiteers board of trustees meeting Sept. 16, 2026

After a very nice lunch provided by Mike and Linda, the meeting was called to order at 1:03 pm. Five in attendance, plus one by phone.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as published in the E.T.
Treasurer's Report was approved as provided to the board.

Old Business:
Indoor flying is lacking in participation. Considerable discussion as to various ways to help with that.

Taibi Field update: we are searching for alternative sites, and waiting for feedback from a few individuals.

New Business:
Gary Fogel is hoping for more support for his SDSU aviation class, where his students use model airplanes as a big part of their grade. Please let us know if you can help. Contact Don Bartick for more information.

Our monthly contest has a Power event. Most people fly E-36, so that will be the event starting with the September contest.

Mike Jester is still awaiting an official ruling from the AMA regarding his push to keep P-30 a simple event, meant primarily for beginners.

It was decided to increase the meeting host's food allowance to $40.00.

Contest Reports:
No discussion.

Good of the Order:
The Bartick's went on a tour of an Amazon Fulfillment Center in Chula Vista recently. They reported that the place was enormous, and just amazing to watch in operation.

Next meeting will be held at the Bartick's home on Dec. 9th.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by John R. Merrill, struggling secretary.



AUGUST 2026 OUTDOOR PHOTOS - A.Bartick











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WHAT'S HAPPENING -



Sept 25-28, 2026 56TH United States Free Flight Championships

Oct 18, 2026 - San Diego Orbiteer Outdoor Monthly
Taibi Flying Field, Perris CA, 7:30 start time.
Events: OT/ NOS / Glider / Power: E36

Nov 13-15 2026 DUAL-CLUBS Free Flight Bonanza