

Foundations of Flight

Launching a 2-Way Sidebody Piece

Brought to you by Brianne Thompson of AXIS Flight School at Skydive Arizona in Eloy with Thomas Hughes of Arizona Airspeed. Photos by Niklas Daniel.

AXIS
Flight School

Reasons to Perfect a Sidebody Exit:

Performance

- ▶ To set up for a successful skydive
- ▶ To perfect a basic and fundamental exit technique used extensively in 4-way formation skydiving
- ▶ To facilitate an easier transition into larger formation exits

Execution



Setting Up in the Door

Person 1—The Outside Jumper (aka the Floater)

The person in this position (equivalent to the Outside Center position in 4-way) should “head-jam” the exit. To do this, evenly distribute your weight on both feet as you climb out toward the front of the door. Facing the interior, place the back of your head, still inside the plane, on the bar attached to the top of the door frame. This provides you with balance and frees your hands to take grips. While standing in the door, you should rely on the strength of your legs to keep you on the plane and to initiate the exit—use the head-jam for balance and to set up in the door, not to keep you in place. As you set up, avoid scraping your reserve flap on the door; you don’t want to dislodge your reserve pin and have a premature reserve deployment.

Person 2—The Inside Jumper

If you are the inside jumper (equivalent to the Inside Center position in 4-way), you’ll take a grip at the shoulder and a grip at the thigh (a sidebody grip) on the floater. Place your left foot forward and the right foot back. Face the door opening at a 45-degree angle while lowering your hips toward the floor and getting them as close to the threshold as possible. Your goal as an Inside Center is to lead with your hips, not your shoulders, through the door. Once your hips go over the threshold, the rest of your body will follow naturally. Leading with your hips will help ensure that you present your body to the relative wind on exit. Lining up close to the door in this position will also ensure that, if you are flying 4-way, the Tail flyer will be able to take grips.

The Exit

Person 1—The Outside Jumper

No matter who gives the exit count or whether you are in a 2-way or 4-way, if you are the Outside Center you should bend your knees on “set,” releasing your head and neck from the bar and allowing you to spring from the plane with a lot of power using your legs.

Your goal is to jump up and away from the airplane while aggressively presenting your hips to the relative wind. By getting far from the airplane, not only will your presentation be better, but if you are launching a 4-way, you’ll allow room for the person flying the Point position to exit. (This exit is designed for aircraft with high tails and large doors—such as Twin Otters. Jumpers should not perform exits with high, aggressive launches on low-tailed aircraft such as PAC-750s or King Airs due to the possibility of colliding with the tail.)

Person 2—The Inside Jumper

If you are the Inside Center, you should aggressively drive your hips down and through the door opening. Simultaneously, you’ll want to present your hips to the relative wind and maintain a strong sidebody grip and formation shape with your teammate. The goal of the exit is for both flyers to be at a 45-degree angle to the plane while still on the hill.

Helpful Hints

The reason the Outside Center jumps up and away from the plane and the Inside Center drives down is to ensure that both flyers are on the same level on the relative wind. Remember that just because the wind on the hill is coming from a different direction, the laws of freefall don’t change—the flyers must be on the same level in relation to the wind when flying in formation.

The rules of launching a piece are the same as launching a solo—presentation is key. As long as both flyers present to the relative wind, holding onto grips will not hinder the exit in the slightest.