

FOUNDATIONS OF FLIGHT | HEAD-UP SIDE SLIDES

Brought to you by Niklas Daniel and Brianne Thompson of AXIS Flight School at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. Photo by David Cherry. Information about AXIS' coaching and instructional services is available at axisflightschool.com.

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Prerequisites

- Ability to fly neutral in a head-up orientation
- Ability to recover to the back-fly orientation after loss of balance
- Proficiency transitioning from a back-fly to a head-up position (see Foundations of Flight—Back-Fly to Sit-Fly Transition,” June 2013 *Parachutist*)

Purpose

- Increase air awareness, stability and mobility
- Improve performance in vertical and mixed formation skydiving and dynamic tunnel flying

Execution

When practicing this move during a skydive, start by facing perpendicularly to the aircraft's line of flight. Remember to check altitude and heading between each maneuver.

Small drive

For a small drive, perform the move using only your arms while in a neutral sit-fly posture. Look in the direction you wish to travel and bend the leading arm at the elbow. Your trailing arm should extend upward. The posture will be similar to that used for a back-fly side slide.

Medium drive

For a medium drive, involve your torso in addition to your arms. Lean back slightly on the relative wind while twisting at the waist. This should redirect your sternum in your desired direction of travel.

Large drive (pictured)

For a large drive, the last piece you add to the equation is extending the leading leg. Exposing the inside of your leg to the relative wind creates a lot of power that takes time to learn to manage. Therefore, extend your leg in small but increasing increments

as you focus on maintaining your balance. If you create too much power, immediately pull your leg back into a neutral sit-fly posture. For added leg stability, rotate the heel of your leading foot in the direction of travel. Your trailing leg will remain mostly passive during the side slide. However, with practice you can increase its utility by using the outside of the shin for additional power. To do this, move the foot of the trailing leg slightly inward.

Helpful Hint

Take the time to learn how to create smaller drives before advancing to the larger ones. The goal is to maintain control throughout each maneuver and demonstrate solid starts and stops.

The authors intend this article to be an educational guideline. It is not a substitute for professional instruction.