

KiteTalk

Draw a horizontal line, six inches long, on a piece of paper.

At the left side write Precision and on the right, put Tricks.

Now, hold your pen in the middle and move it one way or the other and you will begin to appreciate the problems a designer encounters when trying to get an all round sport kite that will do everything – the closer you get to one – the further you are from the other.

Somehow, of course, the other problem that has to be overcome is to make it fly in

anything from 2 to 30mph without having to make any adjustments.

Pretty impossible task huh? – Well only a few years ago the line you just drew was

twelve inches long and some of the modern kites of today have got it down to about four and are now trying to bend it in the middle!

High Tech

Of course these kites don't come cheap, they are made of the latest, high tech materials and, there is a mountain of research hours to be paid for.

I watched Tim Benson develop the Deep Space over many, many months. Using untold combinations of rods and spars with variations to the length and stiffness matched against small changes to how tight the sail was and alterations to the bridle. There are literally thousands of combinations to be had and all of those can make the kite react differently – and then the strength of the wind changes!

Start Here

At festivals our sponsor kiteworld.co.uk often send people over, who are interested in

learning to fly but have no idea where to start.

The easiest thing would be to say “Go spend at least a hundred quid and get something big” but that teaches them nothing.

Instead I take them through a familiar pattern from which I can predict – I will always get the same reactions.

I start them off on a small kite – something around £30 to £40 which has low pull and needs a little bit of wind to get it going.

These are usually quite difficult to fly at first but make good training and if, as usual, they are a bit quick then I'll put a tail on the kite which will also make it more stable and concentrate the flyer's mind on keeping it in the air.

Basic stuff of how not to do it (and try not to hit anybody/thing) is followed by how to launch and what to do to correct the Kite's flight path to keep it flying and then a quick demo by myself or my wife Marilyn just to prove that it is all possible.

As soon as they are confident enough and before they decide that they are going to head off to the world championships with this wonderful little beast, I deprive them of the kite and put in their hands something like a Prism Quantum (not the Pro), which has a shock absorber built in to the nose.

More Control

I love the look on their faces on launching as they get their first experience of – “All kites are not all the same!” and they can feel the firm pull and much better controllability.

“£80 pounds?” they say “Perhaps that's a little too much – But I'll definitely buy the other one!”

So I put them back on it and the usual comment is about how wishy-washy it

now feels and that maybe a more expensive kite is a better investment. There aren't too many more kites around the £80 mark that will deliver tricks, precision and fly well enough to take you on to the next stage, maybe the Alpha Plus or a HQ Jive for instance, but a larger kite chosen carefully usually means that you can fly in much lower winds and will be much slower and easier to control when the breeze freshens.

New Kites

HQ have a good new range of kites this year (look out for my reviews), and Premier

have a nice range from top American designer Jon Trennepohl from Skyburner Kites.

These kites are mostly good, all-rounders that you will be able to buy from most traders or on the net and will cost between £85 and £135.

The sail will be better quality though probably not the best available and most manufacturers are now using better quality, stiffer and lighter rods such as Skyshark or Avia, (Skyshark now label all their rods) so that is another thing to look for. Another, wrapped tubular rod used a lot in kites these days is 'Dynamic' but I have had trouble sourcing it.

There are some kites here I would thoroughly recommend as a first or second kite purchase or even to use in pairs or team flying.

But if you want real class then it's going to cost more.

Even the inexperienced eye can spot the difference between a high end kite and a cheapie if you stand them side by side, and believe me – you do get what you pay for!

Don't be influenced by the colours – Some of the French schemes have not been to my liking but there are a lot of high end kites being flown by some very experienced flyers.

Our Favourites

A good, British, buy is the Fury or the smaller, easier to trick Fury 85.

One of my personal favourites has got to be the Deep Space and coming up close behind it is The Widow Maker from Skyburner Kites.

Marilyn and I flew the XT.s in competition and at £240.00 per kite we are, perhaps, understandably, less enthusiastic about using these for teaching or fly before you buy but you are still welcome to try the DS or WM!

Contact us

We do keep with us quite a selection of mid range kites, so if you want to try before you buy then look out for the "Close Encounters" banner or email us through the contacts page on this site to make sure that we have it with us.