

# Open Distance Competition Rulebook



**USHPA<sup>®</sup>**  
UNITED STATES HANG GLIDING  
& PARAGLIDING ASSOCIATION

## The United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, Inc.

### FORWARD

The worldwide governing body for all sport aviation is the Federation Aéronautique Internationale (FAI). The Commission Internationale de Vol Libre (CIVL) is the division of the FAI, which represents hang gliding and paragliding around the world. The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is the United States representative of the FAI. The United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (USHPA) is the only authorized affiliate of the NAA that represents the sport of hang gliding and paragliding in the United States. The USHPA is authorized to formulate and establish official competition rules and to sanction hang gliding and paragliding events in the United States.

This official USHPA Competition Open Distance Rulebook has been developed and revised by the USHPA Competition Committee as authorized by the President and Board of Directors of the USHPA. The rules set forth herein shall govern all USHPA sanctioned open distance hang gliding and paragliding competitions

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## The United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, Inc.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This document will serve to define parameters and provide guidelines for fair, fun, and safety minded competition in an open distance format.

## 1.2 Definition

An Open Distance Competition uses scoring based on a total distance measurement. It does not recognize a fixed goal.

## 1.3 Philosophy

Many accomplished pilots relish the adventure inherent in epic journeys over a distant horizon. It is the unknown that draws us; the serendipitous unfolding of events that shape the flight; the unique problems that arise; the challenges to our creativity. Each of us will have a unique experience; our own tale to tell. For many of us, cross-country flying is what first inspired us. It is what we seek to do at our local sites with our friends.

In this spirit we have devised the following Open Distance Competition format. There is an emphasis on simplicity, inclusiveness, and freedom from encumbering restrictions. The guidelines are flexible and purposefully not overly-specific in an effort to accommodate the unique features of different venues.

# 2. Competition Rules

## 2.1 Competitor Responsibilities

- Competitors must possess current USHPA "Pilot" or "Rogallo" membership status with the exception of pilots with a foreign address. Foreign pilots may purchase a 30 day USHPA membership.
- Minimum pilot proficiency rating of intermediate (or foreign equivalent with IPPI card). The Meet Director may raise this requirement in meet-specific rules, as long as it is specified on the sanction application.
- Parent's (or guardian's) written consent (notarized) if the competitor is under 18 years of age.
- Entrants should attend all meetings, briefings, roll calls, etc. as requested.
- Entrants are responsible for becoming thoroughly familiar with all competition rules and information from all meetings, briefings, roll calls, etc.
- Entrants should make themselves and their equipment ready for launch in a timely manner and will execute a safe launch in the time made available to them by the launch official, following the prescribed launch procedure. Pilots have the responsibility to decline launch if they think conditions are unsafe.
- Entrants will follow generally accepted right-of-way and thermal etiquette rules, unless otherwise specified by meet rules documented in print.
- Entrants must follow the *Competitors Code of Conduct*.
- It is the entrant's responsibility to keep informed of all schedule changes, course modifications, rule amendments, etc. Ignorance of the rules, tasks, etc. including changes made verbally at pilot's meetings, will not be considered a valid reason for exception to said rules.
- Entrants wilfully violating any of the above shall be subject to penalty or disqualification at the discretion of the Meet Director.

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### 2.2 Safety

- When an emergency occurs, the Safety Director or Meet Director should be notified without delay.
- Entrants must recognize when conditions are too advanced for their skill level.
- Entrants must maintain safe equipment at all times and pre-flight their equipment prior to launch.
- Entrants must assure that his/her glider is considered safe to fly and has not been materially altered from the manufacturer's specifications.
- Entrants shall understand and obey all applicable airspace rules, FAR part 103, local, state and federal laws, landowner and site restrictions, and meet-specific rules.
- Entrants are required to have a radio capable of transmitting and receiving the meet authorized frequencies. At the discretion of the meet organizer, additional legal frequencies may be supported.
- Pilots shall possess all USHPA ratings and special skills required (or foreign equivalent) for the site being flown and be a current USHPA member in good standing.
- Entrants shall fly within their abilities and in safe mental/physical condition.
- If dangerous weather develops on course, each pilot is responsible for observing, recognizing and avoiding flying in dangerous weather.
- It is the pilot's responsibility to fly safely and terminate the flight as dictated by changing and/or dangerous conditions.
- Due to the vast area and terrain over which the competition may extend, it may be impossible for the Meet Director to observe or recognize many of the weather-related conditions that may develop over the course of a day. It may also be virtually impossible for the Meet Director to communicate weather conditions to pilots due to the lack of dependable radio and cell phone communications.
- Pilots who encounter dangerous weather developments are encouraged to radio that information to their drivers and ask their drivers to attempt to communicate that information to the Meet Director when and if their drivers happen to have cell phone or radio connectivity.
- Upon receipt of a report of dangerous weather, the Meet Director will broadcast that report on the official meet frequencies. Pilots may attempt to monitor the official meet frequency for reports. Pilots should note, however, that due to the vast area and the terrain, these broadcasts might not reach all areas of the course. Pilots are reminded that they are responsible to observe, recognize, and respond appropriately to dangerous weather/flying conditions.
- Pilots will be required to sign an acknowledgment of these rules and a release, waiver and assumption of risks related to all risks involved in the competition, including those related to weather and reports of dangerous weather or lack thereof.
- Pilots who knowingly fly into unsafe conditions or who violate FAR 103 may be disqualified at the discretion of the Meet Director or Safety Director.

### 2.3 GPS Flight Documentation

GPS will be used for flight verification. The competition organization must announce beforehand what software (approved by the Competition Committee) will be used and the types of GPS instruments that will, at minimum, be supported.

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The means of flight verification must show any start points and turn points claimed in the order specified on the daily task board, and some evidence of landing location.

### 2.3.1 Track Log

The pilot must provide an unambiguous track log that shows, without doubt, that the data was collected by the pilot of the hang glider or paraglider on the flight in question. Including:

- Of the declared turn point feature from the correct location in the correct sequence
- Between the takeoff and landing
- With all relevant information being present on the track log.

The track log must show for any start, or turn point that is claimed for the flight, one of the following:

- A point within the cylinder
- A pair of consecutive points not more than 30 seconds apart for which a straight line drawn from the first point to the second point passes through the allowable sector
- A waypoint entered with 'Mark Enter' within the cylinder
- A "Mark Enter" point created at the landing point as soon after landing as possible

### 2.3.2 Errors in Coordinates

Start point and turn point coordinates may be named in any way the Meet Organizer deems appropriate. If any are named for nearby physical features, the coordinates and NOT the physical feature will define the turn point location. Turn points may be based either on the coordinates OR on a physical line but the default for any meet must be specified in the Meet Rules and any exceptions announced at the daily briefing. Changes to turn point coordinates may be made or new turn points added at or prior to the task briefing, however in such cases sufficient additional time must be allowed for careful manual entry or downloading of the new data.

## 2.4 Launch Procedure

Launch procedures are at the discretion of the Meet Director. However, those procedures must be fair and should not place a handicap on any identified pilot or group of pilots. Meet directors are encouraged to adopt the following protocol to assure that all pilots have a fair opportunity to launch safely:

*The Launch is considered valid if the total number of safe launching minutes exceeds 3 minutes times the # pilots divided by the number of launch sites.*

The launch procedure must be communicated verbally and in the meet rule book. The following procedures are possible options.

### 2.4.1 Open Launch Procedure

A pilot wishing to launch will move his glider into the takeoff staging area behind all of the other waiting pilots. No pilot's glider may remain in the staging area unless that pilot is in the immediate area with harness on.

A pilot in takeoff position must take off, or begin to move to the back of the staging area, within 30 seconds if any pilot in the staging area expresses a serious desire to start. The 30 seconds must be uninterrupted by unacceptable take off conditions, as determined by the launch official. The launch official will tell the pilot when the 30-second period begins and will count down the last 10 seconds before it ends. If the pilot does not launch in these acceptable 30 seconds he must then exit the launch position. If the pilot launches after the allotted 30 seconds, a penalty of 5% of that pilot's score for that round will be deducted for each

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additional 15 seconds or portion thereof until the pilot either takes off or starts moving out of launch position.

If a pilot chooses not to launch, or is deemed by any launch official as not moving expeditiously toward launch, that pilot must immediately leave the staging area or move behind all the other waiting pilots.

### 2.4.2 Ordered Launch Procedure

A random launch order will be generated. A different random order will be posted each day. The launch order of pilots, relative to one another will not change during a round. A pilot returning for a re-flight will rejoin the launch order in his original position.

A pilot at any point in the launch order, with harness on, may “push” the launch by stating “I’m pushing”.

When the launch is being pushed, each pilot who is ready for takeoff i.e., harness and helmet on, starting with the pilot at that time number 1 for takeoff and ending with the pilot preceding the pushing pilot in the launch order, will have 30 seconds allotted on launch in which to take off, in order. Failure to move expeditiously toward the takeoff ramp or failure to takeoff within the allotted time will be considered as declining to launch and the pilot must move to the end of the launch order; if the pilot launches after the allotted 30 seconds, a penalty of 5% of that pilot’s score for that round will be deducted for each additional 15 seconds or portion thereof until the pilot either takes off or starts moving out of launch position. Each pilot who has pushed the launch will have 30 seconds allotted on launch in which to take off or else receive a zero score for the round. The 30 seconds referred to above must be uninterrupted by unacceptable takeoff conditions, as determined by the launch official. The launch official will tell the pilot when the 30-second period begins and will count down the last 10 seconds before it ends. A pilot who is next to take off in the launch order may remain in takeoff position indefinitely if no pilot is “pushing the launch”.

### 2.4.3 Identification by Launch Official

Each pilot is responsible for seeing that he is correctly identified by a Launch Official.

## 2.5 Protest Procedure

USHPA defines a complaint as a verbal request by a competitor to the designated official, usually the Meet Director or Safety Director, to investigate operational matters with which the competitor is dissatisfied. The designated official may be able to resolve the issue. However, if the competitor is still dissatisfied, he may appeal for a judgment from a committee of all the meet officials. Such protests must be made in writing no later than 24 hours after the incident being protested. Meet officials should make every effort to make a ruling within 24 hours of the request.

In the event that the protest procedures of the meet do not adequately resolve the problem, the pilot may file a written appeal, explaining in detail the nature of the injustice, and providing all available evidence to support his case, to the USHPA Competition Committee c/o USHPA headquarters. Such an appeal is to be filed with USHPA Headquarters not more than 10 days after the end of the meet in question.

The Competition Committee will rule on the appeal within 60 days of the receipt of the appeal by the USHPA. They may choose to conduct further research on the matter. Pending Board approval, USHPA may alter the final results of the contest in response to such an appeal in the event they find compelling evidence to support the claims of the appealing pilot.

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### 3. Competition Scoring

#### 3.1 Tasks

Any task wherein the distance goal is undeclared and scoring is based on a distance metric will be considered a valid open distance format.

The task committee may allow pilots to choose their own tasks on certain days.

Multiple tasks may be allowed on a given day.

Possible tasks include:

##### 3.1.1 Straight Out

Straight-line distance launch to landing. Possible rules for a given day:

- Routes may be fixed by a task committee.
- Shotgun, wherein pilots determine their own routes.

##### 3.1.2 Turn Points

Multiple predetermined turn point cylinders may be included in a route as long as no end point is declared. Scores are measured as the sum of the progress along straight-line legs of the course.

##### 3.1.3 Triangles

Multiple laps over a closed triangular course as long as no end point is declared. Triangles are valid for scoring if no leg is less than 28% of the perimeter. Scores are measured as the sum of the progress along straight-line legs of the course.

#### 3.2 Scoring

Open distance competitions will be scored as a function of straight-line distances flown from a predetermined start point to the point of landing, or as the sum of straight-line distances on legs of a predetermined course (exceptions described in "Scoring Modifiers" below).

It may be allowable to add scores from more than one task on a given flight; however, only one flight may be scored on a given day.

Hang gliders and paragliders will be scored separately.

##### 3.2.1 Raw Score (RS)

Distance flown will be modified as a function of the type of glider used. On certain days, where pilots are flying different tasks, a task multiplier will also be used. This modified value is called the pilot's raw score (RS) and is expressed by the following formula (multipliers described in "Scoring Modifiers" below):

$$RS = (\text{miles flown}) \times (\text{glider multiplier}) \times (\text{optional task multiplier})$$

Daily raw scores (RS) may be rounded to no less than one decimal place.

##### 3.2.2 Pilot to Winner Ratio (P/W)

The pilot's raw score (RS) is then formulated as a proportion to the winner's RS:

$$PW = (\text{pilot's RS} / \text{winner's RS})$$

Daily P/W ratios (pilot's raw score / winner's raw score) shall not be rounded to less than three decimal places.



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### 3.2.3 Ranking Points (RP)

The P/W ratio is then multiplied by the square root of the number of pilots competing on that given day. The resulting values are multiplied by 100 to establish ranking points (RP), which serve as the pilot's score for the day.

$$RP = (P/W \text{ ratio}) \times (\text{square root of the \# of pilots}) \times 100$$

### 3.2.4 Totalling Scores

The sum of ranking points (RP) from each day of a meet determines the Meet Champion.

- Daily raw scores (RS) may be rounded to no less than one decimal place.
- Daily P/W ratios (pilot's raw score / winner's raw score) shall not be rounded to less than three decimal places.
- In the event of a tie, scores may be recalculated from their track logs without rounding.

### 3.2.5 Examples

#### Example from a day with 64 competitors

Pilot	RS	P/W	# of pilots	Square Root	RP
1	125	1.000	64	8	<b>800</b>
3	111	0.888	64	8	<b>710</b>
11	85	0.680	64	8	<b>544</b>
19	40	0.320	64	8	<b>256</b>
20	39.5	0.316	64	8	<b>253</b>
31	19.5	0.156	64	8	<b>125</b>

#### Example from a day with 16 competitors

Pilot	RS	P/W	# of pilots	Square Root	RP
1	47	1.000	16	4	<b>400</b>
3	29	0.617	16	4	<b>247</b>
7	19	0.404	16	4	<b>162</b>
12	13	0.277	16	4	<b>111</b>
14	8	0.170	16	4	<b>68</b>

RS (raw score for a given day = miles flown x glider multiplier x task multiplier)

P/W (pilot's raw score divided by winning pilot's raw score)

Square Root (the square root of the number of competitors for that day)

RP (ranking points: score for the day. When summed it will determine meet and national rankings)

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### 3.3 Scoring Modifiers

#### 3.3.1 Exceptions

Generally, a pilot's daily mileage will be measured as a straight-line distance from launch to landing. Exceptions:

- The day's task may stipulate a starting gate or turn point from which measurement will begin. However, rules may not identify an end of task goal.
- Out and return and closed geometry tasks are measured as the sum of straight legs between pre-identified points. A pilot completing part of an identified leg is further awarded distance between the last completed turn point and landing. However, all landings may be required to be in a pre-assigned corridor subject to local meet rules and penalties.
- Pilots flying in violation of FAR 103 may be subject to scoring penalties or disqualification for the day.
- If a task is stopped, but not cancelled (see below), scores will be awarded for progress along course up to the point in distance 15 minutes before the task was stopped. Measurement will be to a point on the ground below the pilot.

#### 3.3.2 Glider Multipliers

To allow Open Distance competitions to be more inclusive, different glider types will be allowed to compete together using the following multipliers:

Hang Gliders:

- Single surface = 1.25
- Double surface with kingpost = 1.0
- Topless = 0.81
- Rigid = 0.70

Paragliders:

- Open Class (Above DHV 2, Above EN-C, CCC) = 1.0
- C Class (DHV 2, EN-C) = 1.15
- B Class (DHV 1-2, EN-B) = 1.20

#### 3.3.3 Task Multipliers

Task multipliers are to be used only when pilots compete using different tasks on a given day. An individual's points for a task are calculated by the following criteria:

- Straight Out tasks will be awarded one point per mile from start to most distant point on the GPS track log.
- Out and Return tasks will be awarded 1.3 points per mile summed over the straight-line course. To be eligible for this multiplier, at least ½ of the return leg must be completed. Otherwise the score multiplier is 1.
- Triangular tasks will be awarded 1.5 points per mile summed over the straight legs of that geometry. To be eligible for this multiplier, at least ½ of the final leg must be completed. Otherwise the score multiplier is 1.

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### 3.3.4 Valid Flight Days

Days are considered valid for scoring if the following criteria are met:

- In the opinion of the launch director, all competitors have had a reasonable opportunity to launch. Meet directors are encouraged to adopt the following protocol:

*The Launch is considered valid if the total number of safe launching minutes exceeds 3 minutes times the # pilots divided by the number of launch sites.*

- Three flights are of greater than 1 hour duration.
- Three flights are in excess of 10 miles.

### 3.3.5 Penalties

A pilot's score may be subject to penalties. If, in the opinion of the Meet Director, there is compelling evidence that a pilot has wilfully violated aviation statutes or safe flying practices, then that pilot will receive zero miles for that day.

### 3.3.6 Stops and Cancellations

The Meet Director, in consultation with the Safety Director, has the power to stop or cancel a task after some or all of the competitors have launched. Flying conditions unsuitable for competition or an emergency situation may be reasonable cause for such action.

- If a task is stopped, but not cancelled, scores will be awarded for progress along course up to the point in distance 15 minutes before the task was stopped. Such flights must satisfy the normal validation requirements.
- Cancelled days do not meet validity criteria (as listed above) and will not be scored.

## 3.4 National Champions

National Championship Titles shall be awarded and recorded on the USHPA web site.

A pilot's National Champion ranking is based on his/her total Ranking Points (RPs) accumulated in their best twelve (12) scored days at US "National Championship Event" competitions for the current year. Titles will be awarded to the top pilot in each of the following categories, as long as at least three pilots compete in the class at a National Championship Event:

- HG – Men's and Women's
- PG – Men's and Women's

Glider classes not applicable, as glider types are normalized through a daily glider multiplier process.

## 3.5 National Rankings

National Open Distance Rankings are established by summing the Ranking Points (RPs) from a pilot's best twelve (12) scored days in USHPA sanctioned Open Distance events. At least 8 of these scores must have been flown in the current year; up to 4 scores may be carried over from the previous year. The scoring year begins and ends on January 1. The National Open Distance Ranking will be tracked in each of the following categories:

- HG – Men's and Women's
- PG – Men's and Women's

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Glider classes not applicable, as glider types are normalized through a daily glider multiplier process.

In the event that open distance international competition is developed, the United States teams will be chosen from the national rankings of the preceding year.

## 4. Guidelines for Meet Organizers

### 4.1 Pilot Education

- Maps available to all pilots as part of a pre-meet packet
  - Showing restricted airspace
  - Showing problematic landing situations
  - Showing roads and geographic features
  - Showing possible routes and/or corridors
- Pilot briefings should be detailed and include information on local weather patterns and historically difficult or dangerous geography
- Pilot pre-meet packet should include
  - Maps
  - Radio frequencies
  - Mobile phone numbers
  - EMS access
  - Emergency & contingency procedures
  - A synopsis of the rules & the *Competitors Code of Conduct*
- Pilots should be reminded that the Open Distance format allows pilots to make many independent decisions for which the pilot alone must take responsibility

### 4.2 Driver Support

Drivers should be offered support.

- Detailed briefings of local problems
- A 'retrieval packet' that includes:
  - Maps
  - Radio frequencies
  - Mobile phone numbers
  - EMS access
  - Emergency & contingency procedures
  - A synopsis of the rules
  - A reminder that the Competitors Code of Conduct applies to them

### 4.3 Communications

Communication systems should receive priority attention.

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- The site-specific limitations on 2M radio and cell phone coverage should be discussed, and contingency arrangements encouraged. Possible alternatives:
  - Mobile repeater
  - Satellite locators (such as SPOT or InReach)

### 4.4 Cancellations

Meet Directors have the authority and responsibility to stop or cancel a given day of competition. Flying conditions unsuitable for competition or an emergency situation may be reasonable cause for such action. The decision to cancel or stop the task will be communicated verbally to pilots who have not yet launched. That information will also be broadcast on the Meet Frequency at ten-minute intervals (i.e.; 1:40, 1:50, 2:00, 2:10...) for a period of one hour to pilots in the air. The Meet Director is the only person authorized to cancel or stop the task. Since radio transmissions are not infallible, no pilot should make any assumptions as to whether a task has been cancelled or stopped unless he/she has actually heard the announcement and has recognized the Meet Director's voice.

### 4.5 Pilot Fatigue

A plan should exist to address issues of pilot fatigue. Possible solutions:

- Include no score days (i.e. score best 5 of 7, or 4 of 5 days)
- Include a few closed-loop or out-and-return tasks that limit late retrievals
- Consider time shorted tasks (late launch, or early curtailment)

### 4.6 Other Guidelines

- Meet directors and task committees are encouraged to promote the straight out task when feasible as it is most representative of open distance philosophy.
- Meet directors should keep a record of unrounded individual flight scores for a minimum of 2 years.
- Capable & knowledgeable members of *Task & Safety* committees should be assigned.
- Competent launch officials should be identified.
- A plan & mechanism for media interaction should be in place.
- It is encouraged that daily scores and updates be posted on an internet site.
- A plan to identify and deal with legal and rule infractions should be in place.
- Protest procedures should be clarified.

### 4.7 Special Requirements in Paraglider Towing Competitions

- Each pilot shall have a hook knife.
- Each tow operator and/or towing device shall have a hook knife accessible (ground-based towing).
- All operators of towing devices (not drivers) will possess a current Tow Tech Appointment.
- All operators of towing devices (not drivers) will be reported to USHPA after the meet under penalty of loss of pilot and instructor ratings and appointments.

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- All Tow Techs will be able to maintain constant visual contact with the pilot throughout the tow (i.e. the Tow Tech can't also drive unless they have some sort of observation system, such as mirrors).
- All participating pilots will have an ST rating and a P3 or higher.
- Split-apart tow bridles will be used for all PG towing over the water.
- Accidents/incidents must be reported under penalty of loss of pilot and instructor ratings and appointments.
- Static line towing is disallowed in sanctioned competitions.

## 5. USHPA Competitor Code of Conduct

Competitors who participate in USHPA Sanctioned events agree, as a condition of their participation in such events, to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner.

Competitors and their ground crews will maintain a standard of conduct that will not bring discredit upon their fellow competitors, the Meet Organizers and administrators, or the sport of hang gliding and paragliding in general. Competitors are required to act in a manner that will promote the continued good will and practice of hang gliding and paragliding in the area, including, but not limited to:

- Act in a sportsmanlike manner consistent with the spirit of fair play and responsible conduct and in accordance with the rules of the contest.
- All gates and property must be left as they are found.
- Care must be exercised when moving personnel and gliders across fence lines to prevent damage.
- Vehicles will only be driven on roads and at reasonable speeds.
- Land well clear of livestock. Do not land in crops. If landing in a cultivated field - hay, wheat, etc. - is unavoidable, the pilot must find the landowner, or landowner's representative, and request to pay for any resulting damage.
- Complaints from property owners/lease holders may result in penalties.