

## Choosing the Harness for You

No matter how good your wing, you will not enjoy your flying much if your harness is a poor fit or the wrong type for you. At worst an ill-adjusted harness can increase your risk of injury.

The major manufacturers tend to have a range including a very lightweight type with minimal protection and an external reserve container. These are really only suitable for pilots who will be doing serious hiking or climbing. Not a good choice for the first timer as a rule. At the other end of the range are sophisticated racing machines designed to minimise drag and enhance performance, they may feature thin protection, leg fairings and a very supine position. If you need one of these you (should) already know more than this article can tell you. If you are a relative beginner or a weekend flyer, then yes you will look very cool in one, but it won't do your flying much good! The majority of harnesses feature the essentials which are:

- Comfortable position and good adjustment range
- Good back protection
- Easy to use reserve deployment system
- Storage space for your bag and other kit.
- Most pilots also demand quick-lock buckles. (Much more convenient and safer if you need to get out fast, near water for example) Good back protection can be achieved two ways, either with an airfoam pad or by having some kind of encapsulated air chamber. The trapped air option may take a few steps to become fully operational but is very light and has almost no bulk for transport, the airfoam is permanently ready but is much bulkier. In 2006 the improvements in encapsulated air systems by Sup'Air have meant the trapped air type are almost totally effective within the space of even the shortest launch procedure and so they are fast becoming the system of choice because of both the cost, weight and bulk advantages. We do not recommend any kind of hard back protection device. Reserve position is pretty irrelevant, what matters is how easy the handle is to locate and use. All the harnesses sold by Northern have effective and tested reserve mounting systems. (exc a few specialist models). The most popular reserve position is underseat as it allows the handle to be located in a very easy-to-find location, tucks the reserve out of the way in a symmetric position and leaves a large storage space on the back. Despite the enormous range of harnesses available, we can normally narrow the choice for the typical first time buyer to perhaps 2 or 3 models, the differences then are primarily a trade off between features such as storage and adjustment range, cost, and weight. (Though many of the Sup'Air range can be upgraded with a carbon seat plate saving about half a kilo) By far and away the most critical element is size - it must be right for you! Possibly even more than gliders, you need to try before you buy; the advantage being that you can hang in a harness in any weather. Go to a shop that has a good range - like ours! Almost every glider manufacturer makes a harness (or range of harnesses). Some of them are terrible. You don't have to buy the same brand harness as the wing you fly. We find that (despite offering a choice) we sell about 50 Sup'Air harnesses for every other brand! Any of Northern's staff will be able to give you advice on what specific harness will best suit your needs.