



Information for prospective members

Rev. 3-31-2026

Thanks for your interest in Harris Hill Soaring! We are a nonprofit club dedicated to soaring education, demonstration, and competition.

Soaring is an accessible, cost-effective way to learn how to fly. At Harris Hill, you are joining a friendly community of soaring enthusiasts. Our membership includes pilots at all levels, from beginner students to recently licensed to cross-country pilots. We also have members who fly in soaring competitions at the regional, national, and worlds levels. How high and far you soar depends on you; some pilots like to stay within sight of the airport, while others have flown hundreds of miles in a single flight!

Harris Hill Soaring has resources to support learning, flying, and socializing. We own a fleet of gliders, from trainers to competitive racers, so we can support pilots at all levels. Several of our members are FAA-certified flight instructors, and instruction is always free (see details below). We have a beautiful new flight center with a kitchen and spaces to relax and socialize. Outside the flight center, we have a BBQ grill and a picnic area.

How do I learn to fly?

Learning to fly is a fun challenge that you will tackle incrementally, with your instructor providing guidance and feedback at every step. You'll start by learning to control the glider while in flight, first with level flying, then progressing to turns and other maneuvers. You will eventually learn how to take off, fly behind the tow plane, and land. You will also learn how to find and use thermals (rising columns of warm air) so you can reach higher altitudes and fly for longer periods of time. Each new step in learning to fly will be demonstrated by your instructor as you follow along on the controls (all our 2-seat gliders have dual controls), then you'll try it with the instructor providing gentle corrections on the controls. Eventually you will be doing all the flying!

You begin flight training by taking flying lessons with our instructors, eventually progressing to flying solo. At the same time, you will learn essential knowledge about aerodynamics, glider control systems, weather, safety, airport operations, FAA regulations, and soaring techniques. You will pick up this aeronautical knowledge through bookwork, self-study, conversations with your instructor, and our winter ground school. When you are ready, your knowledge will be tested on an FAA written exam, and your piloting skills will be assessed by an FAA examiner via an oral exam and a flight test.

Introduction to Soaring Package

If you are interested in learning to fly but not sure if you want to commit, try our Introduction to Soaring package. This package gives you an introductory set of lessons and the opportunity to get an idea of what soaring is all about. For \$500, you will receive 30 minutes of ground instruction and three flight lessons. During the flights, you will handle the controls under the guidance of an FAA-certified flight instructor. You will receive a glider pilot logbook and three months of membership to the Soaring Society of America (<https://www.ssa.org>) including three months of Soaring Magazine. To schedule your introduction to soaring, please contact Geoff Knauth at training@harrishillsoaring.org.

How much time does it take to learn to fly?

Students progress at different rates depending on their ability to learn, their age, and how often they fly. This can take from 40 – 75 flight lessons. If you fly often, you may achieve your pilot's license in one flying season (roughly April – October). If you fly only occasionally, you may require multiple seasons to achieve proficiency. There are instructors available on most weekends and most weeks we hold a weekday evening instruction session.

How much does it cost to learn to fly?

A rough estimate is \$3000 - \$5500, spread out over time. The cost will depend on how many flights you require to achieve proficiency (see previous section). This estimate includes our annual membership dues (see application for details) and is based on taking 50 flights before being ready for the flight test. A typical student flight costs approximately \$43 (2022 rates) which covers the cost of the tow plane and glider rental.

Junior member flying is subsidized by HHSC and is substantially cheaper. For example, a pre-solo junior flight only costs around \$8. Membership dues are also substantially reduced for juniors. A rough estimate (based on 50 flights) of the total cost for juniors is \$600.

I'm between 13 and 18 years old. Can I learn to fly?

Yes! We have the top junior program in the country. Teens can join our junior organization at age 14 (or 13 if their parent is a member) and fly solo at age 14. Our juniors can fly before they can drive! They may earn their private pilot license at age 16. Our instructors work very closely with our juniors to ensure that they fly safely and proficiently. Many of our instructors are former juniors themselves and pay close attention to the welfare and safety of our juniors. To learn more about our junior program, please contact our junior program coordinators, Dave Graham and Randy Fatula, at juniors@harrishillsoaring.org.

Will I need to buy my own glider?

Most of our members do not own gliders. Our large and well-maintained club fleet supports our members without the hassle of ownership. If you do decide to buy a glider, we have storage space available for \$25 per month.

How do I apply?

Applications are available in the flight center and on our website. You can submit your application via email or in person. We encourage prospective members to visit, meet our current members, and get a brief orientation about our operation.

Once you are a member, we'll connect you with our instructors. The HHSC is an all-volunteer organization and members assist with all facets of our operation. We will show you how to work our various positions in the flight center and on the flight line. Members usually work one

or two 4-hour shifts per month. See our *Guide to Flight Instruction* for more information.

To learn more about the world of soaring, see the Soaring Society of America website at <https://www.ssa.org>. Please let us know if you have more questions about membership and learning to fly. To contact us, email Akshay Sood and Mike Goldstein at newmember@harrishillsoaring.org. Also see our website at <https://harrishillsoaring.org>.