

■ FOUNDATIONS OF FLIGHT | CLIMBING ONTO A CAMERA STEP

Brought to you by Niklas Daniel of AXIS Flight School at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. Photos by Brianne Thompson. Information about AXIS' coaching and instructional services is available at [axisflightschool.com](http://axisflightschool.com).

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Formation skydiving camera flyers make the most use of camera steps, but jumpers in other disciplines will also find them useful at times. Camera steps and their accompanying handles come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are located toward the rear of both left- and right-door aircraft. (The photographs here show a left-door Twin Otter.) However, due to the size of their planes, safety concerns or structural issues, not all drop zones equip their aircraft with camera steps.

**Prerequisites**

The Skydiver's Information Manual recommends that jumpers hold a USPA C license (200 or more jumps) prior to jumping with a camera. However, jumpers with fewer than 200 jumps may try this exit without wearing camera equipment. Due to the risk of releasing prematurely or colliding with other jumpers, inexperienced skydivers should practice this exit on a solo skydive before trying it with a group.

**Purpose**

- ▶ If you are flying camera for a team, it will give your performers more room in the door.

- ▶ By moving away from your subjects, the camera will have a wider perspective, which makes the footage a more useful debriefing tool for coaches (giving them the ability to see presentation and angles in relation to the aircraft and relative wind).
- ▶ In relation to the relative wind, your location on the camera step will be higher than your subjects at the moment of exit.

**Execution**

Camera flyers using camera steps typically climb out before their subjects. To exit:

- ▶ Check that all of your equipment, including your handles (main pilot chute, cutaway and reserve), is secure.
- ▶ Open the door and check the spot.
- ▶ Climb out as you would for a floater exit (see "Foundations of Flight—The Floater Exit," May 2014 *Parachutist*) and anticipate the wind force you will encounter outside the aircraft.
- ▶ Visually locate the step and handle first. Then make your move toward the camera step with your closest arm and leg. Keep your torso close to the

fuselage to prevent yourself from falling off prematurely.

- ▶ Maintain your balance by gripping the plane with your hands every step of the way and by keeping your body weight on the balls of your feet.
- ▶ Get into your launch position (the body posture that will best help you achieve success during the exit). A beginner should consider performing a belly exit by facing toward the nose of the aircraft and into the relative wind. Review "Foundations of Flight—Floater Exit" for details on proper presentation.

**Helpful Hints**

Before you attempt to climb out on the camera step for the first time in the air, consider practicing your movements while the airplane is on the ground. The goal is to become familiar with every variable one layer at a time.

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