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Gliding badges

Gliding has a long history with issuing proficiency badges. The A, B and C badges (one, two and three stylised white gulls on a blue disc, rarely used these days) originate from the German glider training system of the 1920s.

The symbolism was created around 1923–24 by Fritz Stamer who was head of the flight school on the Wasserkuppe, a 950m (about 3,100ft) high mountain in Germany's Rhön Mountains which is widely known as the birthplace and cradle of gliding. Gliding began there around 1911.

The badge system was adopted internationally by ISTUS (Internationale Studienkommission für den motorlosen Flug, or in English, the International Soaring Commission) in 1930 and by the FAI (Fédération Aéronautique Internationale) in 1932, which later added the Silver (1930), Gold (1935) and Diamond (1949) badges and the long distance diplomas awarded from 750km in 250km increments. The FAI has never published an official graphic specification; the images below are modern vector reconstructions.

A badge | B badge | C badge | Silver badge | Gold badge | Diamond badge

A badge – was awarded for the first solo flight milestone of early glider training after a short controlled solo flight of originally about 30 seconds with a safe landing.

B badge – was awarded after a second training stage with longer solo flights including controlled turns which originally were an "S" pattern.

C badge – was awarded for the first soaring achievement of a sustained solo flight which originally was of five minutes, later typically longer than a normal circuit, using rising air.

The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) gliding performance badges of Silver, Gold and Diamond represent the ultimate hierarchical milestones in sailplane soaring. Earning them requires master level mastery of the energy in the sky which can include thermals, wave, convergence and ridge lift along with immense physical endurance and precise navigation across vast open landscapes. Modern flights have a plethora of technical requirements and must be recorded and confirmed with an approved GPS recording device.

Silver badge (FAI added in 1930) – awarded after a 50km cross-country flight, five hour duration flight and 1,000m height gain. All can be done in the same flight.

Gold badge (FAI added in 1935) – awarded after a 300km distance flight, five hour duration flight and 3,000 m height gain. All can be done in the same flight.

Diamond badge (FAI added in 1949) – awarded after a 300km flight to a declared goal, a 500km distance flight and 5,000m height gain. All can be done in the same flight.

With improved glider design and knowledge of the available energy in the skies, pilots can now also seek distance diplomas.

750km diploma – this is the first of the FAI distance diplomas and is awarded for a documented flight of at least 750km.

1,000km diploma – FAI distance diploma for a documented flight of at least 1,000km.

1,250km diploma – FAI distance diploma for a documented flight of at least 1,250km.

1,500km diploma – this is a high prestige distance badge for advanced club, national or federation presentations for a documented flight of at least 1,500km.

1,750km diploma – this is a high prestige distance badge for advanced club, national or federation presentations for a documented flight of at least 1,750km.

2,000km diploma – this is a high prestige distance badge for advanced club, national or federation presentations for a documented flight of at least 2,000km.

The current world distance gliding record is over 3,000km in a single flight with a flight of over 2,500km having been completed in New Zealand.

As you can see, learning to fly a glider is just the beginning and a life time of challenges await.

If you are interested in trying soaring yourself, come and join us to learn more about gliding, the weather, the wave and the “air pockets” you fly through in powered aircraft and save fuel!

Aeroclub members can fly at gliding club member rates so what are you waiting for? Come and see us any club flying day.

Further details about the club and learning to glide are on the gliding club website at http://www.glidinghbw.co.nz/