



**SKS/Propwash Video Productions'  
R/C Flight School Video  
Volume 1**

**“Getting Started”**  
by Frank Granelli



SKS Video Productions and Propwash Video Productions are actually two different and separate companies. In fact, they are competitors. Both produce excellent RC videos on various topics such as events coverage, like the [Joe Nall](#) and [La Ferte](#) videos reviewed in Sport Aviator's Baggage Compartment, tragic crash videos and educational ones.

Even though SKS and Propwash are competitors, they sometimes work together on larger productions that neither could do as well alone. This is the case with their new educational series: R/C Flight School, Volume 1.

The “R/C Flight School” series is intended to take a new pilot from choosing, assembling and flying their first aircraft through advanced aerobatics and onto all facets of RC model aviation. As you might imagine, the first volume in this series details a new flyer's first hesitant steps getting started in this great sport.

Volume one is hosted by one of model aviation's real stars, Dave Patrick. Dave is a former National Aerobatics Champion and world famous model designer. Dave currently designs some of the best scale aerobatic and scale aircraft available. His Extra 330L that was featured in Model Aviation is still the only scale aerobatic aircraft that performs aerobatics as well as a modern precision aerobatic (Pattern) airplane.

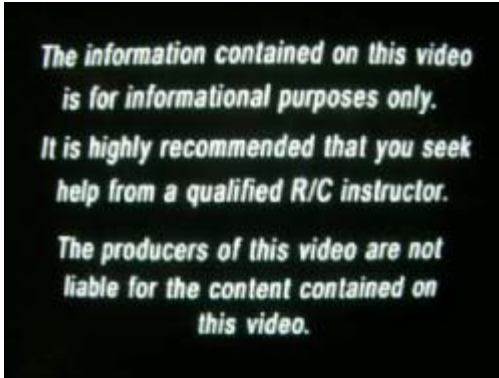


Photo 1



Photo 2

Before getting into the details of this video, note photo 1. This is the warning that starts the Flight School video. There is a lot of information in this video and most of it is vital to getting a successful start in the sport. But no video, no matter how complete, can substitute for a good instructor. This video is a good tool and answers many questions, but like using an RC simulator, it is just a tool and not intended to replace actual flying experience with an instructor. Photo 2 illustrates the “picture in picture” technique that really adds to the flying scenes.



Photo 3



Photo 4

Volume one takes the viewer through the RTF basic trainer selection process and assembly. While Dave outlines several excellent basic trainers, like the [Hobbico NexSTAR](#) and the electric [Magister](#) (both reviewed in Sport Aviator’s “On The Flightline” Section), he uses Hangar 9’s Alpha 60 trainer for this video. Dave has always favored the larger, 60-sized, trainers because of their easy visibility and slightly better handling. He also mentions Hobbico’s great Advanced Trainer, the [HobbyStar 60 Mk III](#), that Sport Aviator featured in the From The Ground Up Series and in a separate review.

Simply because the Alpha 60 is a large, Ready-To-Fly (RTF) aircraft, it is well suited to very new pilots who have never built a model aircraft before. But Dave stresses that any of the many great RTF basic trainers, most of them reviewed in Sport Aviator, would also be excellent first aircraft.



Photo 5



Photo 6

There are many chapters in this video, each headed like photo 5. Each video section then details the subject presented. So if you want to repeat or find a topic, you can just page through the chapters until you find the one you want. The chapters also organize the learning process making it more understandable and easier to follow.



Photo 7



Photo 8

As Dave began detailing the various Alpha 60 components, I was thinking "forget about the airplane, I want to buy Dave's workshop!" His workshop alone would be a good video subject showing all the tools and spaces needed to build an aircraft from scratch. But, we must get back to the video. After detailing the components, Dave starts to assemble the Alpha 60.



Photo 9



Photo 10

The first step is to tighten any loose covering and to seal the small trim coverings in place (photo 9). Then slide the wing halves together over the aluminum wing spar.



Photo 11



Photo 12

Dave covers aligning the wing halves and taping the center section to hold the wing together. The Alpha 60 has two options to keep the wing attached to the fuselage. The first is using rubber bands and dowels. The second is cleaner and uses nylon bolts. Dave discusses both options but decides, like Sport Aviator did, to use the cleaner wing bolt system.



Photo 13

Using wing bolts to attach the wing to the fuselage requires gluing two wooden dowels into holes in the wing. The video details finding, and cutting out, the holes and then epoxying, including how to mix the epoxy, the dowels in place. Dave also shows how to cut out the wing bolt holes.



Photo 14



Photo 15

Once the wing is finished, Dave assembles and connects the tail pieces. He discusses making using thread locking compound to prevent the four important bolts from loosening and shows how everything fits together.



Photo 16

One of the more difficult assembly tasks on the Alpha 60 is installing the 3-bladed propeller and matching spinner. Dave details this installation well and makes the assembly easier for the new pilot to accomplish.



Photo 17



Photo 18

One of the key steps in assembling or building a model airplane is to find the proper fore and aft center of gravity (CG). Dave explains why this is important and shows how to find it on the Alpha 60. Unfortunately, the video does not show actually balancing the airplane. This would have helped since a properly balanced model airplane actually should pitch nose downward about 10 degrees when suspended on its CG.



Photo 19



Photo 20

The video covers getting the aircraft ready to fly before going to the field. Much like Sport Aviator's article "[Ready To Fly? ...Maybe](#)" Dave covers checking engine parts, radio installation and adjustments. The video spends some quality time showing how to align all the control surfaces and setting the throttle. This section alone makes the video worth it. So many times, new

pilots come to the field with both ailerons set “up”, elevators pointed earthward and throttles that only open 75%. A little setup at home eliminates these problems before getting to the flying field.



Photo 21



Photo 22

A small note here: it is obvious that Dave prepared the Alpha 60 well ahead of filming the video. No doubt he removed the tank then checked it and the fuel lines carefully for leaks. Why do I say this? Because the fuel lines must have been inspected and re-installed since the Alpha 60 arrives with the red (or “hot”) line connected as muffler pressure and the green (cool) line as fuel supply. I mention this only because a new pilot following along with the video might connect them backwards as the video shows in photo 21. Dave also covers all the radio settings and does an excellent job discussing trim tab use.



Photo 23



Photo 24

The video explains how to manually set the control surfaces (photo 23) and checking the on-board flight battery. This is extra important and a step usually omitted from most instructional manuals. Dave does a great job covering this vital topic.



Photo 25

This video covers a lot of other topics normally omitted. There is even a section on the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA), the largest sport aviation organization in the world and Sport Aviator's parent organization ([www.modelaircraft.org](http://www.modelaircraft.org)).



Photo 26



Photo 27

Another important subject is just what equipment you need to fly. Assembling the airplane and checking it out are important. But if you can't get fuel into the tank or "light" the glow plug, your aircraft is going to be useful only as a museum display. Dave covers this subject well.



Photo 28

After all the assembling and checking, we finally get to the flying field. But this can be a daunting experience for the brand new flier.



Photo 29



Photo 30

Dave makes it easy as he discusses how to best get help from the experienced pilots there. He makes a very important point that most first-time pilots don't always understand until it is finally

becomes their time "in the box" to help another new pilot. Those experienced pilots at the field *want to help new flyers get started*.

As Dave says, they are *eager* to help. The new pilot should not be afraid of asking for assistance or think they are "bothering" other pilots. Training new fliers is probably the most rewarding part of this sport except maybe for winning the World Aerobatic Championship. (I wouldn't know about the latter but certainly do enjoy the former.)



Photo 31



Photo 32

The video discusses field etiquette, such as blowing your exhaust away from other aircraft, and spends considerable time on proper frequency control. Frequency control is a safety requirement but also is good insurance that your aircraft will survive to fly another day. Pay attention to this part of the video.



Photo 33

Just because this video is so detailed about building, checking things over and how to behave at the field doesn't mean that the flying part has been minimized. In fact, there is a lot more flying in this video than in most instructional efforts.



Photo 34

Photo 35

There are many chapters covering takeoffs, flight maneuvers, turning and other flight techniques. The video uses the picture-in-picture technique on all flight shots. The viewer clearly sees the aircraft but can also see everything Dave does on the transmitter. This video presentation, combined with Dave's detailed narration of every stick input, really shows just what RC flying is about and how to do it best.



Photo 36



Photo 37

This visual technique is especially helpful as Dave discusses stalls and maneuvers such as rolls. Note in photo 36 that the right hand elevator control is fully in the back, or "up", position while the aircraft is pitching downwards in the stall. The aileron control is also all the way over on the right during the right roll sequence (photo 37).



Photo 38

But Dave's loop sequence shows just how little elevator is required for a good loop. Most pilots just yank the elevator stick to full up and call that a loop. Actually that is an egg, not a loop. Without even realizing he is doing so, Dave inputs very little "up" elevator then gradually releases it as the aircraft climbs further into the loop. He actually inputs some "down" elevator over the top and then gradually feeds in "up" as the aircraft nears the bottom. This technique makes a truly round loop. I guess you can take a precision pilot and put him into scale flying but you just can't take the precision flying out of him.



Photo 39



Photo 40

Since they are important, landings are covered in detail. This includes flying the approach pattern and performing “go-arounds”. Dave even shows how to land “dead stick” with the propeller stuck in the “off” position.



Photo 41

But this video is not all serious instruction and flight lessons. As a bonus, the viewer gets to enjoy watching a truly capable, professional aerobatic pilot having some fun with the Alpha 60. Like most Basic Trainers, the Alpha 60 can do more than bore level holes in the sky. And Dave shows just what it can do.

But his aerobatics have a more serious message too. Learn to fly, listen to your instructor, practice and you too can soon be throwing your trainer around the sky with the joy and skill that Dave shows in this end part of the video. Well, maybe not with all the skill Dave has but good enough for we mere mortals to enjoy.

If you want to see what it RC flying is all about while learning to build, check over and fly your aircraft from one of the best pilots/instructors in the sport, this 72 minute video is what you have been looking for. It is available for \$19.95 at either of these two websites:

<http://www.propwashvideo.com/dbID/148.html>

<http://www.skvideo.com/dbID/174.html>