



Formation Skydiving Glossary

(And Other Skydiving Specific Terms for Formation Skydiving collected by John Hoover)

Every sport has a vocabulary all its own. As skydiving practices became more defined, people began inventing names for them. Some names are familiar and others you might not know unless you become involved with a particular group of jumpers

Here is a collection of 4-way skydiving terms amassed over the years. The words in italics are defined elsewhere in the list. If you have one we can add, please email jhart@teamfastrax.org. Enjoy

A-Slot: The primary position for a jumper in any block or random, as defined by their *continuity* plan.

B-Slot: The first alternate position for a jumper in any block or random. This usually means a jumper is in his piece partner's position as defined by the team's *continuity* plan.

Bull-Riding: Exiting a plane with grips on the base formation and more than one body length from the door.

Booty: The part of a jumpsuit covering the foot, intended to act as a rudder during freefall.

Booty Blowout: When a booty comes off during a skydive, usually during the exit. This can cause poor turns, or a mental distraction.

Brain lock: Forgetting the next formation in the sequence of a jump, usually a momentary event. Also see *helmet fire and possum*.

Cat-Piece, Cat Formation, also Catted: When jumpers are directly behind one another and have the leg grippers of the jumper in front of them.

Center Point Cross: When the center-point of an individual or subgroup crosses the center-point of another individual or subgroup, and therefore does not show the intent of the required degrees of turn in a block transition.

Center-Point Shift: When the center-point of an individual or subgroup moves, relative to the center of the overall formation.

Center Solution: When the inside center and outside center change positions; usually to get out of a mirror-image of the *first page* of points.

Cogging: A method of turning where each individual or subgroup turns in the opposite direction of the person or subgroup next to or closest to them. Cogging allows their body parts to mesh together like the gears of a machine.

Continuity: The planned positions for everyone in a formation, usually coupled with the word “scheme” or “plan” to determine the primary positions for all the formations in the dive pool.

Creeper: A wooden or synthetic-material board on wheels cut in a shape that supports the torso and legs, that a jumper can lie on to simulate the belly-to-earth position of freefall.

Creeping: Rolling sequences of formations on a horizontal plane using *creepers*.

Dirt-Diving: Rehearsing the sequence of formations in a skydive, either mentally or by *walking* or *creeping* the formations.

Door-Jam: Practicing the exit while on the ground, usually at a *mockup*.

First Page: The first time through a set of points on a single skydive, before repeating the points.

Free Flyer or **Free Guy:** Anyone making an individual move during a block transition. Also called a “solo” flyer.

Front Float: The jumper at the front of the door, usually the point of the formation. The front float often dives out of the plane.

Front-Piece or **Front-Pair:** The piece-partners on the front half of the formation, usually the *front float* and the *outside center*.

Gorilla Gripping: Gripping so hard as to cause pain.

The Hill: The sub-terminal transition out the door of the plane, until the formation is parallel with the ground.

Helmet Fire: An extended *brain lock* when a jumper conducts a panicked mental search for the next formation in the sequence. Note: record turns can be executed during a helmet fire.

Holding Your Ground: Maintaining your center-point relative to the center of the formation.

Hucklebuck: When grips become so discombobulated that they resemble a wrestling hold.

Inside Center: The jumper who usually stays inside the plane for exit, and at the center of the formation in the *rear piece* or *rear pair*.

Knee and Head Crosses: When two or more individuals, subgroups, or any combination thereof, has to pass knee to knee, or head to head. Also called “switches.”

Line of Flight: The direction the plane is flying as the group exits.

Possum: An extended *helmet fire* that causes a jumper to totally forget all of the formations in a particular jump sequence. It is similar to a possum that crosses a road, stops and stares at the headlights before he is crushed.

Memory: When a jumper has more than five or six points before returning to the beginning of the formation sequence. Also called a *ten-pointer* or *non-repeater* because a jumper will usually have to remember at least 10 points.

Mirror Image: The opposite-hand formation from the standard or A-slot. It’s the formation you would see if you viewed it in a mirror. A left-hand donut becomes a right-hand donut, for example.

Mockup: A structure built to resemble the doorway of a particular aircraft -- i.e., a Twin Otter or Pilatus Porter -- and used for making practice exits. Also see *door-jam*.

Non-Repeater: see *Memory*.

Ninja-in-a-Sack: An opening so hard that it feels like a ninja jumped out of your D-bag and kicked you in the back of your head. It’s sometimes called a “neck breaker.”

Outside Center: The jumper on the outside center of the plane at exit, and at the center of the formation in the *front-piece* or *front-pair*.

Out of Slot: Any position that is not the A-Slot for a jumper; usually refers to the B-Slot.

Over G-2: To over-analyze a jump or any aspect of a skydive. Also known as over-engineering.

Patty-Caking: Touching an intended grip more than once without ever achieving stationary contact.

Patty-Cake-Dive: a jump that requires little to no movement, points are achieved by briefly touching grips, usually resulting in 30 or more points in time

Piece-Partners: The two jumpers that turn the majority of block subgroups together. Piece-partners are usually the *front float* and *outside center*, and the *rear float* and *inside center*.

Prepping: Short for preparing. It usually refers to getting ready to make a particular turn or move in the next sequence or transition. It can be but is not limited to gaining or dropping altitude in preparation for a *vertical* move.

Rear Float: The jumper at the rear of the door at exit, and usually the rear of the formation.

Rear-Piece or **Rear-Pair**: The two piece partners on the rear half of a formation; usually the *rear float* and the *inside center*.

Relative Plane: The geometric plane a formation is on during a jump, usually referred to when the formation is on the *hill*, or at *sub-terminal*.

Reverse Engineering: Looking at the reverse order of points in a jump to help find the best engineering.

Rotating: See *spinning*.

Side-Bodied: When a jumper has an arm gripper and leg gripper on the same jumper.

Shearing: A method of turning where individuals or subgroups turn in the same direction as the person or subgroup next to or closest to them. (This method can require a *vertical* transition, center-point shift, or head and knee crossing.)

Slide Across: To move the exit from one side of the plane to the other, depending on where the door is located, without mirror imaging the formations

Snow-Flaked: See *two-way*.

Soup-Sandwich: Generally messed up, or sloppy, in the air or on the ground.

Spinning: Rotating or turning on an individual's or subgroup's center-point.

Split Option: Having a wide stance in the door with one leg forward and the other back so another jumper can take grips on your legs, (can be split option left or right, depending on which foot is forward)

Sub-Terminal: Airspeed that's less than terminal velocity. Sub-terminal is found after exit, on the *hill*.

Staging: The dividing of a subgroup or individual transition into smaller increments or individual moves. Within subgroups, this can mean that one person in the subgroup moves while the other holds his ground and then the roles are reversed. Individual moves can be staged by breaking down transitions into smaller increments, for example a 540 can become 180 and then a 360 to finish the move. Staging allows for better eye contact and targeting during transitions.

Standard: The generally accepted *continuity* for a block or random formation.

Subgroup: Jumpers that remain together during the transition of a block.

Swing Move: Taking a longer move to get back into an *A-slot* before starting the sequence of formations again.

Targeting: Identifying an intended position before moving there.

Ten-Pointer: See *memory*.

Terminal: Short for terminal velocity; the fastest speed achieved during a skydive, usually around 120 mph.

Trailer-Hitch: Wrapping a hand and lower arm around the calf or thigh of a jumper you are *catted* on.

Translating: Moving the center-point of an individual or subgroup relative to the center of the formation.

Two-Way: Usually refers to two jumpers faced off with each other, gripping each other on the arms or hands.

Vertical(s): The passing of an individual or *subgroup* over or under one another during a transition.

Walking: Practicing the dive sequence while standing.

Working Time: The time given to perform scoring formations in a skydive, this time starts when the first person leaves the plane, usually 35 seconds for 4-way and 50 seconds for 8-way