



Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

By Allen Silver

Q I would like to practice pulling the ripcord on my parachute before shipping, but what do I do with the sprung pilot chute?

A Pulling the ripcord before shipping your parachute is a great idea! Your rigger doesn't need the practice...and every aerobic pilot should practice finding the handle before it's actually needed. Many of my customers are reluctant to pull the ripcord because they have a box that fits their parachute perfectly, and they're not sure what to do with the pilot chute.

If there is enough room in the box, lay it alongside the parachute. Or, if space is at a premium, place the pilot chute in a couple of plastic bags from the supermarket. Compress the pilot chute into the bags and tie it shut with the bridle of the pilot chute. The bridle is the approximately 4-foot long, 1-inch wide piece of webbing that ties the pilot chute to the top of the canopy.

Instead of tying the bags shut, many people prefer to carefully tape them closed. This works great, but be careful that *none* of the tape touches any parachute material. The glue from the tape is harmful to nylon over time.

Q To help prevent theft, can I mark my parachute container with a marking pen?

A Absolutely not! Your parachute is a very strong piece of equipment. However, it is chemically fragile. Just like tape adhesive, some marking pens can damage the nylon container over time. A parachute is a life-saving device that deserves extra care. Don't weaken the



The safe way to personalize your parachute container is with sewn lettering. **Never** use a marking pen.

material by writing your name all over it. (Besides the safety issue, this also reduces the resale value, unless you sell it to someone with the same name as you!)

If you want to deter parachute thieves, there are two ways to go about it. One way is to order a unique color combination, such as pink with purple and orange stripes and green trim. No one will want to steal it, but no one will want to fly with you either. A better approach is to have a qualified rigger sew a name tag on the carrying bag or directly to the parachute harness. Many companies like Para-Phernalia, maker of the Softie parachute, can add a monogram of your name or N number. This is a great way to personalize your parachute. It looks much better than a marking pen, is better for the nylon, and can be removed by a qualified rigger if you decide to sell your parachute.

For flying clubs and fixed base operators that have many parachutes to keep track of, I have sewn club patches and ID numbers on parachute harnesses and carrying bags. This is an easy way to keep track of parachutes for scheduling

maintenance and rental use. If your club has a dozen parachutes that all look similar, it is much easier to say, "Take parachute No. 2," instead of hunting for a serial number or trying to find "the blue one that's kind of lumpy at the bottom and smells funny." Happy flying...and keep the questions coming! 🇺🇸

Allen Silver is the owner of Silver Parachute Sales and is always available to answer your questions about parachutes. Send your questions to Allen@SilverParachutes.com.

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