

# Raleigh AeroMasterS Resources for New Pilots

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The RAMS Club welcomes you to the fun and rewarding hobby/sport of radio control flying. New pilots to this hobby usually have questions about what equipment to buy and where to buy it. The information that follows is compiled by the experience of many of our members on what is good quality equipment and good places to buy. We are not endorsing any particular manufacturer, brand or retailer but just want to give information that will serve to get you started. An important point to make is that some of the ready-to-fly (RTF) kits available, which are very cheap and tempting to keep cost low, may not necessarily perform to the level that will allow you to enjoy this hobby.

So, before you buy, ask an experienced modeler what they would recommend. We also suggest that you subscribe to a couple of R/C magazines like [R/C Flyer](#), [Model Airplane News](#), [Electric Flight Magazine](#), etc. They carry lots of information to get you curious about possible equipment options and where to inquire about them. All these magazines review all sorts of different products. Just keep in mind that these magazine reviews may be somewhat biased.

Also, be sure to check out the [Academy of Model Aeronautics \(AMA\) Flight School](#). And, speaking of the AMA, you'll want to become an AMA member before you fly. AMA membership is a requirement for flying at RAMS field. [Enroll here](#).

## Airplanes

Building a kit from sticks is almost thing of the past today unless you just enjoy the building process. Most buy an Almost Ready to Fly (**ARF**) kit which is mostly put together when you get it. Also available are Ready To Fly (**RTF**) which already has the engine etc. installed and includes the radio and servos.

Most Folks go for an electric trainer to start with because they are clean and quiet. Nitro-fueled trainers are still used but are losing out to electric because of high fuel prices (\$20 a gallon) and the oily mess left on the airplane.

For your first airplane experience it is best to get a high-wing model with reasonable engine/motor power and that is aerodynamically stable so you can have a chance at learning to fly without having to fight bad airplane behaviors.

## Electric Airplanes

If you choose to go with an electric model, just remember that you may want extra sets of batteries.

The Apprentice from Horizon Hobbies. Comes with a 5 channel 2.4ghz radio with limited capacities and is ready to fly. It is a good introduction to electric airplanes and a good trainer. It is made out of a special durable foam that can be repaired with epoxy glue or foam-safe cyanoacrylate (CA). Cost is about \$300.00.

The Alpha 450. It is a small, but nice-flying electric trainer from Horizon Hobbies. It comes as airplane only (ARF) FOR \$130.00. Also comes with all the equipment installed except for the radio (Plug & Play) for \$210.00. Then you can get a Spektrum DX6i (6-channel radio), DX7 or DX8 or a good JR (also available through Horizon Hobby) or Futaba radio that will work very well when you move on to your next, more-sophisticated, airplane. This airplane is made of balsa/plywood with Ultracoat covering.

Nexstar EP from Tower Hobbies is a nice higher-end electric airplane RTF with a Futaba 6-channel radio for about \$430.00

The GWS Slowstick is the airplane at its simplest. All its components are cheap and accessible. The aircraft is easy to fly and will teach the basics of aerodynamics quickly. Only severe crashes will damage it enough to send you home to do repairs. Many of our club members still fly the Slowstick after years of experience because it is FUN. The basic airframe with an outrunner motor and Electronic speed controller is available for less than \$50 from Graves R/C (the standard model uses a brushed motor, which you will be disappointed with). two batteries, two servos, and a simple LiPo battery charger would be less than \$50. A simple transmitter and receiver can sell for \$120 and you are in business and out of the toy airplane category.

## Glow/Nitro Airplanes

Alpha 40 DSM2 from Horizon Hobby is a balsa/ply airplane covered with ultracoat and comes RTF with a Spektrum DX5e radio. This radio is good but with limited capabilities to grow into more sophisticated airplanes. The engine included is an Evolution engine that tends to be quite reliable for new pilots. It is in the \$300.00 range. Remember that these nitro airplanes do require for you to get support equipment like an electric starter, 12 volt battery for the starter, glow fuel, fuel pump, glow igniter etc. Check on the above websites for start-up field packs that include most of these accessories except fuel, which most of the time you need to buy locally.

There are a number of other ARF airplanes available that come as the airframe-only and you can buy the engine, servos and radio equipment to suit your specific requirements. You will come across these options as you research some of the previously-mentioned websites. Good advice we can give you is to spend a couple of afternoons with us at the flying field and see what we are flying so to get an idea of what interests you.

If you plan to go with a glow airplane, consider that the .40 size has been the standard for at least 30 years. The Tower Hobbies Tower Trainer 40 MKII is a good ARF to consider, most of the other ARF suppliers sell a similar airplane. Cost is about \$280.00.

For your first flights you will need a primary trainer and an instructor. If you have already built your dream P-51 and believe you do not need an instructor please come on out to the field anyway. We will cheer you on and provide garbage bags for your airplane. No that's not true, none of the guys at the field would EVER, EVER, EVER make fun of a crash victim until we get to know you. We would rather see you start with a trainer aircraft rather than get discouraged by a crash right away. Save the P-51 for later.

## Flight Simulators

Flight simulators can be a great help for shortening the learning curve. If you crash, press the reset button rather than going home to spend time and money repairing your plane. Several are available which offer realistic graphics and realistic airplanes. A

cheaper solution is the free for downloading FMS simulator. FMS does not have super graphics but is fully functional and hundreds of aircraft are available for download.

## Radios

Most members of the club are using JR/Spektrum brand and some are using Futaba brand. Other brands are perfectly acceptable (Airtronics, Hitec, etc.) however you may find some difficulty in finding someone to help with programming your radio or using a buddy box system at RAMS using other brands. Buddy box/trainer systems let you fly using your own radio while your instructor stands by holding another radio ready to take over if your airplane gets into trouble. This is a very good thing when learning to fly.

If you are pretty certain that you will be staying in the hobby more money will get you a computerized radio. Most modern radios in use at RAMS field are computer radios. These radios allow programming of control sensitivity, mixes of control surfaces (for example: when flaps are selected the elevator automatically change to keep level flight) and other features, the computer revolution has reached us too. Several airplanes can be stored thus allowing you to use the same radio for all of your fleet.

## Retailers

Unfortunately, some of the local hobby shops in our area that were offering good starter sets have closed. Some of the remaining hobby shops close to our area had to cut down on the available products they offer and what has more mass appeal which is not always good quality equipment. Nevertheless they have inventory of items needed to keep you going in the hobby. As much as you can support them, we encourage you to do so. Here are some of the hobby shops we frequent, listed in no particular order:

Toytown Hobby Shop, 507 Broad St., Fuquay Varina, NC 27526 - Phone (919) 577-9007.

The Antique barn and Hobbies 2810 Forest Hills Road SW, Wilson, NC 27893 - Phone (252) 237-6778 carries a good supply of airplanes, parts and supplies.

Raleigh Hobby & RC 4505 Fayetteville Rd. Raleigh, NC 27603 - Phone (919) 772-1211

Carolina Hobbies 1405 Patterson Rd, Durham, NC 27704 (919) 596-0143

Patterson road. crosses highway 98 (Wake Forest to Durham) about 5 miles East of Durham. There is a CVS pharmacy at the intersection. Go North on Patterson road for about 2 miles, Bill Wynne's shop is on the left behind his home. **CALL FIRST** Bill is not always at home. He has a good selection of parts for electric and nitro planes and can order anything you want.

K/C Hobbies 10948 N. Main Street, Archdale, NC 27263 - Phone (336) 434-3482.

Located in Archdale K/C has an excellent selection, knowledgeable staff and low prices.

Hanger18 Hobbies, 1207 D Kildaire Farm Rd. Cary, NC 27511 - Phone (919) 465-3353.

## Internet Retailers

When our local hobby shops don't carry the items we need there are several internet sites that cater to our R/C hobby. We find Horizon Hobby and Tower Hobbies to be on the higher price range but products bought on their sites carry some of the best service and technical support. For those that choose electric airplane setups Hobby King, out of Hong Kong, has reasonably good quality lithium batteries, battery chargers and electric motors for amazingly low cost, but their customer support is generally poor. Most of Hobby King's model airplanes are inexpensive but sometimes low-quality.

Some of the internet stores appropriate for the R/C beginner are (in no particular order):

Graves R/C--not the cheapest but carries most of the R/C equipment you may need.

Has reasonably good customer support.

Atlanta Hobby-- again, not the cheapest but carries most of the RC equipment you may need. Has reasonably good customer support.

BPhobbies is an online hobby store located in New Jersey that has many of the Electric RC products at a reasonable price.

Nitroplanes is a competitor to Hobby King. They carry mostly electric planes, not nitro as the name suggests.