THE “A” CERIFICATE

The BMFA runs an Achievement Scheme with tests at a basic level - the "A" test - and at a more advanced level - the "B" test. The scheme runs in 5 different categories;

- Fixed-Wing
- Helicopter
- Silent Flight - Electric
- Silent Flight - Slope
- Silent Flight - Thermal

EDMAC requires anybody flying unsupervised to have passed the "A" test for the type of model they are flying.
For fixed-wing flyers it will usually be the *Fixed-Wing* test - though the *Silent Flight - Electric* test may be appropriate for electric-powered gliders.
For helicopter flyers this will naturally be the *Helicopter* test
As the Fixed Wing "A" test is the one most commonly taken by club members, our Vice Chairman and BMFA Examiner Roger Marples, has written some guidance notes on it.

An Examiners View of the "A" Fixed Wing Test
What we Hope to See

The “A” test is an examination of the novice pilot’s ability to independently fly an aeroplane safely with a reasonable degree of control over its attitude and positioning whilst in the air. The most important issue that an Examiner will be looking for is that the pilot has safe control over the plane at all times, that the plane is being flown in a natural manner, not too fast nor too slow, such that the Examiner will be left in no doubt that in the case of an emergency, the pilot could land or save the plane without any damage to persons or property.
We are not looking for a flashy, fast and low-level demonstration of the pilot’s skill, indeed it may lead the Examiner to doubt whether the pilot has the ability to control the plane in a safe manner at normal flying speed, so a nice, controlled flight will gain plus points. Equally, flying too high will also be interpreted as a lack of confidence and may result in the Examiner halting the Test.
The pilot must also be able to trim the plane to level “hands off” flight in the event of the plane being out of trim. For absolute safety trimming should be done in the following order Elevator first, then Aileron and finally Rudder.
Mode 2 pilots (throttle on left) should NOT attempt to trim either the Elevator or Aileron using the right-hand thumb, as control over the plane whilst making the adjustment will be lost. All adjustments should be made using the left-hand thumb including those to Throttle and Rudder.
Mode 1 pilots should use their right-hand thumb to adjust the Elevator followed by the left-hand thumb to adjust the Aileron. Should the Rudder need adjusting this should be done using the left-hand thumb.
The pilot must have read and completely understood the following sections of the 2026 Edition of the BMFA Handbook and have studied the Achievements section on the BMFA web site

The “A” Certificate (available as a download from the BMFA web site).

Make sure that you understand the manoeuvres and their shapes as indicated in this section. Apart from the above the pilot should also read and thoroughly digested page 15 Air Navigation Orders, pages 32 and 36 on Safe Operation of Model Aircraft in the 2026 version of the BMFA Handbook. It is likely that the pilot will be asked questions on these sections after they have finished the flying test. They will also be expected to answer questions on and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their Club Rules as well some referred to as mandatory questions –see BMFA website.

The “A” Test and its manoeuvres.

The test does not have to be flown as a turn round schedule indeed it is to the pilot’s disadvantage to attempt to do so. As many circuits can be flown as the pilot considers necessary to ensure that he is in the correct position to attempt the following manoeuvre. BUT too many circuits will cause the Examiner to call into question the confidence of the pilot. Should the pilot choose to fly extra circuits these will be considered as part of the Test and the Examiner will be watching for, and expecting, controlled level flying.
The Examiner will be noting that the pilot makes calls as appropriate e.g. On the Strip, Take Off, Landing, Dead Stick etc, even though they may be the only pilot on the strip. Implicit within the “A” test is that all No Fly Zones are strictly adhered to, especially with respect to flying behind the pilot or over the pits area. If No Fly Zones regulations are breached, then the Test is halted and a failure recorded
The Club procedure for Transmitter control must be adhered to and demonstrated.

Pre Flight Checks

These are as laid out in the 2026 BMFA Handbook page 34 and should be done as though the flight is the first one of the day. The Examiner will expect the pilot to talk through what checks they are undertaking and why.
All models, be they I/C or electric must be restrained using a club approved tail restraint.

Take Off and Overfly the Take Off Area

An Examiner will always require an IC or Electric plane (not a glider) to have a rolling take off. The pilot will have to stand in the pilots box prior to take off, check the whereabouts of other planes and activity on the strip, have gone through a final “full power” control surface check to ensure that all control surfaces move freely and in the right direction before commencing take off., and finally make the appropriate “Take Off” call. A helper is recommended to assist at this stage at least to restrain the plane for the full power control surface check. This helper can also act as the pilot’s caller for the Test. If a helper is not available, then the pilot can ask the Examiner to be his caller. The Pilot must stand in the pilots box for take-off and landing.
All circuits flown in the Fixed Wing "A" test should be rectangular with little or no height lost at each turn.
Take off should be done by the pilot flying a straight line after take off climbing gently to a height of approximately 50 mtrs (150ft) before turning into the circuit. The final turn into the “overfly the take-off area” should ensure the plane is broadly in line with the strip with no major adjustment needed to ensure that the overfly is on target.

All circuits flown should be equalised with the distance travelled in a left hand circuit matching that flown in the right-hand circuit.

Fly a Figure of Eight.

To ensure that the pilot has a good view of this and to be able to effectively judge the plane's height, it will be necessary for the pilot to push the circuit away from them for this and all subsequent circuits apart from landing. For this to happen the pilot must either extend the first cross wind leg or shorten the final cross wind leg to put the plane in a position such that it passes the pilot some 20 mtrs. away on the upwind leg. With the plane in this position the pilot will be able to judge more easily the height and positioning of their "figure of eight." To try and judge height when looking directly up at a plane, which would be the case if the strip were overflown, is extremely difficult. By pushing the plane's circuit away, as described above, the manoeuvre becomes very much easier to fly.
The two circles of the figure of eight should be approximately the same size with the cross over point in front of the pilot, with no straight line between the circles and no significant changes in height. The Examiner will be watching out for minor adjustments to be made to throttle, aileron and elevator such that the manoeuvre shape, plane speed and positioning is acceptable. Please note that this manoeuvre is two circles, which just touch, it is not two semi circles joined by straight lines. Failure to make the cross over point in front of the pilot; an extended straight line between the circles; significant changes in height; poor aileron control and lack of throttle management could well lead to a failure.
The pilot must have read the "A" test article on the BMFA website and fully understand the complexities and shape of the manoeuvre, as it isn't as simple as it may first appear.

Fly a Rectangular Course and Land

This should be one of the simplest of the manoeuvres, but the pilot must make use of the throttle, elevator and rudder to control the descent and longitudinal direction of the plane onto the designated landing area, which is the mown landing strip. A perfect landing is not expected, and some latitude is allowed for small errors, but you will be required to land first time with no "go around" in the event of the plane not being lined up correctly for landing as to do so will mean a fail. Should the engine stop after landing the plane can be recovered and the engine restarted for the second part of the test. Should you need to change the battery on an electric plane this is permissible but do ensure that this action is dealt with in a safe and controlled manner.

Take Off and Complete a Left (or Right) Hand Circuit

The take-off must comply with the same requirements as indicated for the initial take off, including visual checks on control surfaces. Climb out is to be straight and gently to height before turning and entering a normal circuit. This circuit must be an overfly of the take-off area.

Fly a Rectangular Circuit at Constant Height in the Opposite Direction

After completing the overfly of the take-off area the pilot has to reverse the circuit direction to demonstrate to the Examiner that they can fly equally well in both directions. The reversal is best flown by going diagonally from one corner to another as it makes the change

in direction a smooth and extended manoeuvre rather than a short and possibly erratic one by going across the upwind and downwind legs. The pilot can however choose whichever manoeuvre suits them best.
After the reverse circuit has been completed the pilot should revert to the normal circuit direction, ideally using the same sequence as above.

Perform a Simulated Deadstick Landing

From the “normal circuit” the pilot will be asked to increase height to approx. 60 mtrs (200 ft) and from a position into wind and approximately over the take-off area the Examiner will call “Dead Stick”. The pilot must then throttle back to tick over and land the plane within the designated landing area without using the throttle again. There is no necessity to go into a rectangular landing circuit as this is a simulated emergency. All that is required is that the plane be landed in a safe but controlled manner within the designated landing area.

Remove Model from Landing Area

This operation does not need any explanation but do check the BMFA 2026 handbook for what is required.

Complete Post Flight Checks

The post flight checks are as stated in the 2026 BMFA Handbook page 36. The pilot should talk through what they are doing and why.

Answer Questions on Safety Matters and Local Flying Rules

These will be based on the BMFA Safety Codes for General Flying and Club Rules - don't forget to re-read pages 15, 32 to 36 from the 2026 BMFA Handbook selecting those sections that refer to the Fixed Wing "A" test that you are taking. A minimum of 6 questions will be asked but may extend to 8. Also check out the “mandatory questions” that are visible on the BMFA web site as the pilot will have to answer at least 5 of these
You may also find it useful to read the Guidance Notes for Examiners and Candidates on the Fixed Wing “A” Test as published on the BMFA web site (www.bmfa.org) under the “Achievements” section.