

Drone Preparation Checklist for Drone Operator / Pilots

1. Permissions & Legal Requirements

- **Check Local Regulations:**

Ensure drone usage is permitted at the event location.

- **Get Required Permissions:**

Obtain any necessary permits or approvals from local authorities, especially in urban or restricted areas.

- **Verify Property Permissions:**

If the event is on private property, confirm permission from the property owner.

- **FAA/CAA Registration:**

Ensure the drone is registered if required by aviation authorities (like the FAA in the USA or CAA in the UK).

- **Insurance Coverage:**

Verify that liability insurance covers drone operations during the event.

2. Site Assessment

- **Scout the Location:**

Review the site for any obstacles (e.g., trees, power lines, structures) and note designated takeoff/landing zones.

- **Crowd Control:**

Plan to keep a safe distance between the drone and attendees.

- **Set Clear Boundaries:**

Mark areas where the drone will be operating, and inform guests to avoid these spaces.

3. Setup Requirements

- **Drone & Battery Check:**

Ensure the drone is fully charged and has backup batteries available for extended filming.

- **Equipment Inventory:**

Pack all necessary equipment, including controllers, batteries, propellers, memory cards, and a portable charging station.

- **Camera Settings:**

Adjust camera settings in advance for optimal lighting conditions (e.g., ISO, white balance, frame rate).

- **Firmware Update:**

Confirm that the drone's firmware and software are up to date.

- **Safety Gear:**

Have any necessary safety equipment, such as reflective vests and warning signs, for the drone operator.

4. Weather Considerations

- **Ideal Conditions:**

Aim for clear, calm weather. Wind speeds should be below 15 mph (25 km/h) for safe flight.

- **Rain Check:**

Avoid flying in rain or fog, as moisture can damage the drone and reduce visibility.

- **Temperature Range:**

Ensure the temperature is within the drone's operating limits to prevent overheating or battery issues.

- **Monitor Forecast:**

Check the weather forecast leading up to the event and prepare for possible delays or rescheduling if conditions are unfavorable.

5. Pre-Flight Preparation

- **Calibrate the Compass:**

Calibrate the drone's compass on-site for accurate GPS positioning.

- **Test Controls:**

Perform a quick control check (throttle, yaw, pitch, roll) to ensure all systems are responsive.

- **Set Return-to-Home (RTH) Point:**

Program the drone to automatically return to a safe point in case of low battery or signal loss.

- **Map Out the Flight Path:**

Define a flight path, including takeoff, shooting locations, and landing points, based on the event layout.

- **Communicate with the Event Team:**

Coordinate with the event team about the drone's timing and areas to be filmed.

6. During the Event

- **Fly at Safe Altitudes:**

Maintain safe altitudes, generally between 100–200 feet (30–60 meters), unless otherwise regulated.

- **Avoid Flying Over Crowds:**

Stick to perimeter areas and avoid flying directly over people to reduce risks.

- **Monitor Battery Levels:**

Regularly check battery levels during flight to avoid sudden landings.

- **Be Flexible:**

Be prepared to adjust the flight path or take a break if unexpected factors arise, such as sudden gusts or new obstacles.

7. Post-Event Wrap-Up

- **Retrieve All Equipment:**

Collect all equipment, ensuring nothing is left behind.

- **Inspect the Drone:**

Check the drone and accessories for any signs of damage from the day's flights.

- **Backup Footage:**

Transfer and back up all footage as soon as possible.

- **Review Shots:**

Quickly review key footage to confirm coverage and quality.