

Lincolnshire Airsoft Club FAQ's

So what is Airsoft?

Airsoft is a team based sport, similar to Paintballing. The main difference is in the equipment we use and the projectiles and tactics that you find on an average airsoft day, or 'skirmish'. The major difference between airsoft and paintball is that in airsoft the weapons used are Realist Imitation Firearms (RIFs), so unlike paintball RIFs do resemble real guns.

Broadly speaking, an average day consists of a group of games, some long (1 hour +), some short (20 minutes or less), but the aim is to capture, or recover an item or location of some variety. The objectives are always explained before the start of a game and it is up to the teams as to how and when they are going to achieve the goals set. At the start of the day, the teams are divided up as evenly as possible (in regards to numbers, experience and ability) each team is given different coloured arm bands – sometimes you will find individuals, who are a particular objective of a game, to have different coloured arm bands to each team.

The RIFs we use shoot 6mm plastic BBs and although they look very different at first glance, the majority of the RIFs do pretty much the same job. So although you may get someone with a great big, shiny looking rifle it does not mean that it will be any more superior to a hired when you are in the thick of it. That is the general idea of airsoft - it's not just 'I have the longest range and therefore I am going to own everyone else', its far more subtle than that. If you are defending an objective, it is up to the attacking team to get up close and personal with you, so time is on your side. Just wait, make sure you can hit your enemy, and give it a good go when you get contact.

At LAC, people generally turn up between 8:30 and 9:45, and the first game usually kicks off around 10am with a break for lunch of up to an hour at a suitable time of the day (usually around noon) between games. Usually, the last game finishes at around 4 to 5 pm.

Buying your first RIF.

"This airsoft sounds cool, but forget about the boots that will prevent me from braking my ankle, the tactical vests that allow me to carry magazines and kit, the goggles that will stop me from reading braille the rest of my life if I get shot in the eyes, I WANT A RIF SO I CAN FEEL ALL MANLY WHILE I WATCH Blackhawk Down AGAIN!"

Okay, so all of us have at one stage or another started out and seen a RIF we think is the best thing since a canny baker took a knife to a loaf. But keep a cool head, relax, and breathe easy, young padawan – you're not quite there yet.

The reasons that aisofting is much more attractive to many players than paintballing is due to the fact that our RIFs look real, and in the long run it is a lot cheaper. Nowadays, they weigh the same, look the same and disassemble the same – and even the police can be confused between the two, so you have to be careful how you handle RIFs. So, imagine just for a second you are a police officer and it's your job to protect the public, although most of them are trained professional they will not know from more than a few inches away if someone is holding a real gun or a fake if you wave it around in your back garden, or show it off to friends. The policy for police forces is always to assume the worst, and respond like the RIF could be real. So out goes the call, armed response officers arrive and you end up scared out of your mind that today could be your last day on Earth. Sounds drastic certainly, but if you really open your mind up and think about it, each step of this little story makes logical sense. Airsoft RIF manufacturers pride themselves on producing quality replica RIFs, which we enjoy using.

"Yeah but I'm not going to wave it around in the street, you idiot!"

Okay, here's another situation for you. You're in your back garden enjoying yourself in a completely non-violent manner. Maybe you are checking the range you have on the RIF in a back field, and doing nothing harmful to anyone. What about your neighbour? A passer-by spots your RIF, assumes the worst since her life is now nearly

over and decides she doesn't know any better. One call to the police and you end up in the same situation. She would be right to call the police if a BB were to travel outside the boundaries of your garden as it is an offence under the Violent Crimes Reduction Act (VCRA) to fire your RIF beyond the boundaries of your garden.

It seems farfetched, yes? I'm sure the guy in York on Tang Hall Lane who ended up in an armed standoff with the police felt the same when his ex-partner called the police saying he had a RIF, which turned out to be a non-airsoft replica PPK.

The point to all this is it's like the lottery. Seems a million miles off till it ends up being your day !

Now, you may think that the easy solution would be just to ban airsoft and all RIFs. And you would be right. In 2007, the government had had enough of all this and decide to ban RIFs. The details aren't important, but airsoft came VERY close to ending because of idiots running market stalls and selling RIFs to children, however, the airsoft community fought back and was given a reprieve from the end of our sport. Thus UKARA (United Kingdom Airsoft Retailers Association) was born; the idea was that by controlling the flow of RIFs, and registering every player and keeping track of them once a year, the airsoft community could be self-regulated and this would allow us to continue.

The rules are simple. Once you play at 3 individual events at the same club in a period of **not less** than 2 months a site owner knows that if he says to a shop that you play at a club, you can then be trusted to buy and own a replica. So you play your three events, and fill in a membership form, and you are on the database of approved airsofters. You are given a membership number and quote that when you are ordering a RIF, the shop checks the database and when they see you on there and they will send you your new RIF.

2 Tone RIFs.

There are RIFs out there called "2 tone" RIFs. The idea behind these is that an over 18 year old can purchase one without the need to join a club or UKARA. The only people who are likely to be interested in buying these are people who aren't registered yet, such as new players.

Maybe you're thinking " *yeah but I can buy a 2 tone RIF now, then spray it myself to be black and sexy, take that mister know it all!*". Okay yeah, maybe – until you realise that part of the exemption we got from the ban of replica weapons was that you are not allowed to modify a RIF, meaning you ARE breaking the law as soon as the paint hits the RIF So this begs the question of how do retailers get away with it. No answer to that I am afraid and I am sure one day this will be challenged in the law courts.

So, what's the option?

Simple - get all your gear ready to go. 2 bits worth spending good money on are safety glasses, or goggles, and your footwear. Then rock on down to a skirmish game, rent a RIF three times, become registered, and then if over 18 order your weapon.

A simple guide to RIFs.

Since this is a new player's guide, here's a little info to dwell on.

RIFs can be broken down into the following groups;

1. AEGs (Automatic Electric Guns) – these RIFs are powered by batteries (similar to the large batteries found in remote controlled cars, boats and planes) which powers a piston that in turn generates the air pressure needed to fire the BB. These RIFs can include pistols, assault guns (AK47, M4 etc) and support guns (M60, M249 SAW etc).
2. Gas powered RIFs – these fire BBs through the pressure generated expelling gas, and are usually powered by green gas, propane or CO2 and tend to come in the form of pistols but can even come as sniper rifles and assault rifles. Green gas is effected by ambient temperature so

you will find that RIFs operating with this gas will not work well in the colder months, whereas propane and CO2 guns are much better in winter but they in turn may not be of use of very hot days as the pressure of the gas can make the RIF fire above the site FPS (feet per second) limit.

3. Spring Powered RIFs – these use the kinetic power of a spring to move a piston that again creates the air pressure to move a BB. They tend to come in the form of sniper rifles, shotguns and pistols. Due to their very nature these RIFs do not fire on automatic so you have a slower rate of fire.

The majority of the RIFs fire plastic, 6mm BBs. They usually have magazines similar to real guns, but obviously this is a game, so there are some differences. The RIFs come in all wonderful shapes and sizes, but most of them do the same job. Yes you will get some that are cheaper, yes you will get some that fire quicker (marginally) and yes, some have slightly better ranges than others, but since you're a new player that means little to you (it doesn't even mean that much to some veteran skirmishers either most of the time) - if you can sneak around your enemy in the midst of all the chaos on the field you don't need an extra 3 feet of range of massive rate of fire to get your target.

There are also a lot of different manufacturers out there, coming from America, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Japan and all over the globe, but at this stage all you need to know is that like all manufactured products they can all break at some point and the most expensive RIF is not immune to manufacturing faults. If you see a RIF that is £100 and think you're on to a bargain and pity all the poor suckers who buy from another retailer with the same RIF and same manufacturer for £200, read the small print as perhaps the other RIF is metal or maybe it comes with more magazines.

So if you see a RIF you really like the look of, have a quick look on YouTube or search on Google for reviews. If you get into the habit of doing 5 minutes of research not only will you learn more and blend in at your local the site, but you will have a better idea what to get next time you are looking to buy a RIF. A sure fire way to find a good RIF is to have a look around at what other skirmishers are using and politely ask their opinion – most skirmishers are not shy of sharing their opinions and we have all been a new player at some point.

The main thing to remember at this stage is if you are totally new and have never played a game, DON'T CLICK BUY! Fret not, I will explain all very soon. Just resist the temptation for now and keep reading.

So, very broadly speaking, that's the RIFs. At this stage, they are all very much alike and you should pick one you like the look of and feel comfortable with. But first you're going to need something to put in the RIF and these are called magazines!

There are three types of magazines that will interest you at this stage. Hi-caps, mid-caps, and low-caps. All three are the same size, but there is a very big difference - Hi caps, or high capacity magazines, are usually what you will find supplied with RIFs in the box. They carry the most ammo (generally between 300 and 500 BBs) and are used by the majority of skirmish sites in the UK. At the top of each hi-cap, there is a little opening that you can flip up and pour BBs into the magazine from your bag, and when you are done filling the magazine you use a little dial at the bottom of the magazine to 'wind' up a spring and this feeds BBs into the loading tube. So you slap in your magazine and away you go. If you fire off 30 to 40 BBs, the spring in the magazine will need winding again, to prepare more BBs to be put into the RIF. You don't have to remove the magazine from your RIF, just give the magazine dial a little wind and you're good to go again.

Mid-Caps, generally speaking, will hold 80 to 150 BBs and there is no winding up dial. Using a little tool called a 'speed loader', the BBs are placed directly into the magazine loading tube and a spring gives tension to the BBs, forcing them into the RIF when you pull the trigger. Because they hold less BBs, you will need more magazines in the field, but you can always take extra BBs and your speed loader into the field and recharge them without too much fuss. Also mid-caps are cheaper to buy, so you don't have to worry too much about the cost difference of taking more mags instead of hi caps.

Lo-Caps are possibly for the truly hardcore milsim skirmisher as they usually carry the same amount of ammo as

a real weapon magazine would (20 to 40 rounds). Sounds hard doesn't it? It is. But some swear buy them, and again, they are cheaper to buy. But if the tactical, stealthy approach is your kind of heaven, stock up on them.

All the magazines are the same size to fit in your RIF and the amount of BBs is the only real difference from a days play point of view. However, not all magazines fit every gun – obviously you can't go fitting an AK47 magazine into an M4, but also manufacturers make their RIFs differently so you may find that a TM M4 may not accept a D-Boys M4 magazine and feed correctly.

Tactical Kit.

So, you have been looking at gear (mainly RIFs) and are convinced Airsofting is for you. Only trouble is, you still have some lingering doubts on the kind of equipment to get. Are you picking the right tools for the job? Are people going to take the micky out of your selection? Do you look like an idiot?

There are two absolute essentials to start off with. Boots and Glasses. There is no way you can walk onto any serious skirmish without either of these.

Facemask / Glasses

Like it or not, chances are that at some point you will very likely get shot in the face or some part of your head. Sadly for me, it happens all too often, but I wasn't all that pretty to start with, so it doesn't make much difference now. The main issue when choosing face protection is choosing credible equipment, you can't just turn up wearing sun glasses and think that you will be safe so when buying face protection make sure that the glasses have the correct safety rating – the credible retailers will clearly state that their safety glasses conform to EN166 and EN170. The secondary issue when it comes to eyewear is comfort - that is, wearing the gear for long periods of time with ease and without it effecting your performance. So ideally, we need something that doesn't feel too heavy, and avoids the dreaded fogging effect that so many people are accustomed too. If you want to find out about the correct rating try the Health and Safety Executive website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/fod/om/2009/03app3.pdf>.

One nice thing about some masks though is depending on how stylish you feel, you can get some rather nice paintjobs made onto the mask, such as that worn by Ghost from the Modern Warfare games. If you feel like getting one of these masks and don't mind doing a little modification to make them comfortable, go for it but be certain that you are not damaging the integrity of the mask. Beware of the mask fogging up and think of how comfortable it is. Skirmishers ages under 16 have to wear full face masks by law and we recommend them at LAC for all skirmishers, although to be truthful most over 16s wear goggles.

Far, far better are the glasses. Although fog can still be a partial issue, it is nowhere near as much of a problem as with masks. You do not have the kind of protection that masks offer, but good issue glasses (£5 or more) offer just as good protection on the eyes from a direct shot. You might be slightly concerned about a bb getting up or under the rim of the glasses and yes this can be a worry, but I haven't seen it happen yet although we have seen it with a mask, and the chances are very low it will happen to you. Tinted glass look cool, but generally don't do anything more for you. They darken your vision and make it harder to pick out objects at differing ranges. Good in bright sunshine, but not essential.

Just to make a point though, you might sometimes see someone who has forgotten their eyewear strolling out into the field, before doing the walk of shame back to the safe-zone to get them. It's always the guy wearing glasses who forgets, because they are so comfortable. It's never the guy in the big black mask.

Boots

Obviously, the more you spend, the more you get here, but ideally you are looking for a set as lightweight as possible, with the best possible ankle support you can buy. Also, it's worth remembering to get a couple of pairs of good, thick socks. On a morning of softing, the most attention I pay is to my footwear. Socks on, feeling comfortable, and the laces as tight as possible. If you spend a little more detail on the footwear, you can be a little less worried about the risk of maybe breaking an ankle, even if you do fall over

Gloves

Again, it's a personal thing. Fingerless gloves obviously mean that mag changes and reloads in the field work better than fingered ones, but you do have the risk of being shot in the finger which hurts a bit. Others use reinforced knuckle protected gloves, and they do look quite cool. But it's down to your taste of course.

Camouflage Clothing

Fitting is everything. You must, must try before you buy and spend time making sure the trousers and jacket fit comfortably. The very last thing you want in the field is to be pulling your trousers up or straining in a tight fitted jacket. The idea of the game, same as eyewear, is to forget that you are wearing it. As far as the actual patterns go, it really doesn't matter. The rational DPM's (Disruptive Pattern Material) of the Army are quite popular, and some people go out in Desert gear too. There is no right or wrong but you should pay attention to the type of environment that you are playing in – some desert camouflage may stick out in woodland, and DPM can stick out in a mud quarry. Just so long as you like the look and it fits right, get yourself some breathable gear.

Tac Vest

LINCOLNSHIRE

Here we move into areas that aren't essential for new players, but you might want to consider getting a tactical vest your second or third time out. I'm sure you have seen pictures or video of soldiers with their vests to carry a lot of equipment about, and we don't necessarily have quite as big a demand for magazines. Still, consider where you might end up with regards to the kit you need out in the field. Maybe 6 to 8 magazines, a pistol as backup, maybe a radio and microphone, water, speed loaders, the list can go on.

There is plenty of choice here and no right answer. One of the more popular ways around this one is to get a vest designed with the MOLLE system. MOLLE (Modular Lightweight Load Carrying Equipment) is a term used for the way that the straps are aligned on these vests, and is a recognized term in airsofting and the military. You will have no problem finding MOLLE adaptable gear and you can then buy MOLLE pouches to arrange on your vest as you see fit. So you buy your MOLLE Vest to start, go out with it and decide "hmm I need pouches to get at my magazines quickly". Okay, so get yourself a couple of pouches and place them accordingly. You go out again, and realise you need a backup pistol on your right side. You go back to the stores and buy a pistol pouch and place it on your vest. This, to me, is one of the great things about Airsoft. The gear and RIFs you take out will continue to evolve as different needs arise, and you will never have the perfect fit. Just enjoy the challenge of getting it perfect

Radios

Generally speaking, unless you are associated regularly with a team and actually have a need for communications on radio's and plan on using them; they are a little bit of a fad. Yes, comms gear looks cool on a tac vest and at some sites; people use comms more than others. But it's really not essential at this stage for you to rush out and get comms gear and radios. If you get to the stage where your like-minded friends want to take it a step up and really start to use comms, there are plenty of good Push To Talk (PTT) radios for domestic use that will do the job up to 100 yards (they are even available at Tesco). Any radio will do, but buy them together so you know they will work together and try to get ones that can run on AA batteries. There are also more professional systems with a range measured in kilometres, but that is for another section of the forum. Just be a sport and don't use your comms to hunt down snipers or listen to the marshals.

So that's pretty much the essentials. Those are purely my views and, like I keep saying, there is no right or

wrong. Just remember, if you have the chance to try something on in person rather than just ordering online, it's always better. The more you pay, the better your gear will probably be, just try not to get too much stuff bolted on to your person – it will only slow you down!

Roles, how do you want to play today?

"That one's big... ooo that one's shiny... that one's long and has better range though... I love that pistol too... what to do?"

I mentioned earlier that most of the RIFs are the same. Well, that's true for the most part, however, some do have little quirks and foibles that others don't. Here we move into the wonderful world of roles.

Now, since you're a new player, you probably have no idea what your play style will likely be. Don't worry, most of us don't have one specific role, and a lot of people have multiple "load outs" based on how we feel like playing from day to day. But, since you have been browsing all the lovely RIFs on offer, and have no doubt seen one you quite like the look of, I'll try to break down some of the typical roles you will likely see.

Assault

Without doubt, most players fall into this category. It doesn't matter whether you are attacking or defending, the term assault I am using is just in reference to the load out of the typical airsofter. So let's imagine a typical airsofter. He has an AEG, something like an M4 or an AK47. He's loaded up on magazines and usually carries around a pistol as a backup. The assault guy is the grunt of airsoft. Quite often you will have a whole day with nobody really specialising in anything in particular, just have a good time shooting each other up with similar weapons in terms of range, accuracy and rate of fire (RoF). Everyone is on a pretty even playing field.

Support Gunner

Now this is where things start to get very interesting.

Imagine if the poor old defender is constantly taking fire. He has had a pot shot at some attacker and is now under fire, or 'pinned down'. But what if he is a support gunner? The RIF he uses, although usually bigger actually does the same job as most assault rifles, but the very big advantage he has is that he uses a special kind of magazine, known as a 'box mag'. Instead of the magazine holding 300 rounds, he has a box mag with 1200 to 3200 rounds in it, meaning he can just hose rounds at the enemy and keep them pinned down for his assault guys to just casually stroll up and blow the snot out of the attackers. Bit of a different story now huh?

There are three small disadvantages of the support gunners.

1. The kit required to get you up and running as a support gunner is more expensive. Not only are most support RIFs larger and more sturdy than regular assault rifles, they cost a lot more. Your average beginner assault rifle will cost you between £100 to £200, but a support RIF, generally speaking is upwards of £400. Add into that the box mags (which have their own reliability problems) are more expensive and the simple fact that you are going to use more ammo, it isn't really a role for the financially insecure.
2. You will always be attached to the main fighting force if you choose to be a support gunner. Don't get me wrong, you will have your mates around you which is great, but they will count on you to get rounds down and you won't usually be up close and personal with the opposition. I have no doubt at all that a good support gunner can turn the tide in a defensive match, since pinning defenders down is the surest way to advance on the enemy and give them some stick, but you aren't going to be charging in glorious battle to storm the barricades.

All in all, it is up to you. If you feel like you just want to help your team to win, and have some desire to

get into a team of your own who needs a support gunner capable of reigning fear into the hearts of the your enemy, go for it. But it's not really a role for those without some trigger time, especially with the money aspect.

Sniper

Every new player will at some point want to be the lone warrior, relying on nothing but a high precision rifle and wits to outthink, outflank, and outshoot the enemy. At one point or another, we have all given it some thought and even given it a go, but it takes a particular mind set to stick with it. After all, it takes less skill and feels less satisfying to shoot 100 rounds at someone and get a 'hit' than it does to shoot 1 round into their person from distance. But there are some very, very big downsides to being the sniper.

First off, let's assume that you are going up against someone with some skill - an enemy that knows what's what on the field. He hears the crack of the single round as you miss him by 2 inches, and immediately, he knows what he is dealing with. He knows that you have to reload your bolt action rifle each time you fire, so he has about a second to move with impunity. Assuming that he doesn't spot you immediately, he probably has a fair idea where you are after the first shot, thanks to the way most games are designed and the sound of your rifle. He has at least 100 rounds to your 10 or 20. It's now just a game of cat and mouse to see who will win first, but be under no illusions, if your first one doesn't slap him, you're in trouble. Looking a bit bleak isn't it?

Secondly, the rifle itself, Since we have such a massive disadvantage on ammo counts and reload times, as well as the need to keep things reasonably authentic, we are allowed a slightly higher power rating than most AEG's. Most assault rifles are allowed to fire a BB at around 350 feet per second, whereas a sniper with a bolt action RIF is allowed to fire at 500 feet per second although there is a minimum engagement distance of 35 metres. This fps is measurable at the site on a machine called a chronograph, and we will insist on you getting it measured before every game, since no-one wants another hole in them. This increase in power makes sniper rifles tempting but it does come with problems.

The choice definitely isn't as vast as assault rifles, and you will have to make some sacrifices to get out there and start scoring hits. Really there are two ways to go when buying a sniper rifle. Either you can go for one that is firing at around 500 feet per second straight out of the box, and tinker away as you see fit, but these usually aren't as accurate as the other option. This is to upgrade a rifle from the ground up. And assuming you can get parts, and assuming you have £400+ to play with, you could either end up with a fantastic sniper rifle to instil fear into the hearts of your foes, or you have just wasted your hard earned cash.

As per all things airsoft, try it first before shelling out the cash or you may regret it.

This only an overview and I have taken excerpts from other players opinions and views in order to compile this.