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.: HQ : Ultra Handles review.

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- ➔ **Review : Ultra Handles**
- ➔ **Size : Prototype**
- ➔ **Skill Level : beginner**
- ➔ **Company : HQ**
- ➔ **Author : johnkiteman**
- ➔ **Submit Date : 19/4/2006**

- Build Quality  Not yet rated
- Performance  Not yet rated
- Handling  Not yet rated
- Practicality  Not yet rated
- Value for money  Not yet rated
- Overall  Not yet rated

racekites.com thinks

This review has scored **57** out of a possible **60** points and has **9** comments

Conventional handles have changed little since I started kiting ** years ago, the grips have improved a little (in particular which part of the handle they cover) and the problem of having the lines between the fingers has been addressed a little by using sleeving on the leaders. The best handles on the market at the moment seem to be from Flexi and Ozone (depending on whether you like fat and squidgy – Flexi, or slim and hard – Ozone). But even when flying with the best handles when you are powered up and flying for extended periods those fingers still get sore and you do experience muscle fatigue and sometimes cramp – pointing to the fact that your hand position is compromised by having the main leader right between your fingers, no room for subtle shifting of hand position there.

Enter the HQ Ultra Handles – a clever design to get around these problems. I was lucky enough to have a pair of prototypes for testing for a couple of weeks and this review is based on that experience.

The main thing you notice about them is that they are made of plastic. Now we have all grown up with this material and my initial thoughts were that plastic = bendy or brittle. The material used is neither and common sense says that good plastic is every bit as suitable as alloy for this purpose. They are a cool shape, they look cool, they look as if they were “meant to be” – rather than something you just make do with because it is easy to produce. They have been designed with a purpose – they look “right”.

Examining the leaders they are conventional in as much as there is a main leader at the top with a harness line behind. At the bottom of the handle things are a little different – the break leader is allowed to slide through the handle with one end connected to the kite killer line, plastic beads form stops at either end of the travel. When flying, the line is stopped by the bead nearest the killer and when killers are deployed the line is stopped by the bead nearest the kite. Clever, effective and by the looks of it no potential for excessive wear when the lines slide through, all edges nicely rounded. Killer cord was normal leader line on these prototypes but I am informed that this will be changed for Ozone type concertinaed bungee on the production model. There are no parking loops.

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Main obvious difference to conventional handles is that they loop round over your hand to take the main lines so no lines running through fingers.

So – whack em on a kite and see how they feel. Really odd is how they feel! Main reasons being that there is no leader through your fingers and that you can adjust your hand position at will. I also found it difficult to know where to put my thumb (no suggestions please) until I had settled into them – it no longer needs to be clamped firmly to the top of the handle, you can play around with positioning. Brake line adjustment is a little different to conventional handles too and I think this will be down to flying style and personal preference in the long run.

After 10 mins of feeling like I was learning to fly a kite again, I settled into it and stopped thinking about them so much. They are impressive in the natural feeling and control they give – free flying in gusty conditions I was able to relax my hands much more. When the kite is not powered up I was moving my hand up the handle to give more feel and better control of the brakes and when it was hanging on for dear life time my hands moved down for a firmer grip and forceful push-pull steering. Conventional handles do not allow you to do this.

The grips (although remember these were prototypes so this may change slightly) were a cross between squidgy fat Flexi and thin hard Ozone, I thought they were really comfy and I prefer Ozone's to Flexi's. On the model I tested, the grips made a funny whistling noise after they had been gripped tightly – comical and could be put down to hasty gluing?

Now killer ease of use and deployment was something I was keen to experience – I always use kite killers for my own safety and confidence and for the safety of those around me – I think you'd be a bit daft not to. I find conventional killer lines a pain though, they get twisted with the lines and get caught on leader knots and generally get in the way. Also there is quite a jerk on the wrists when killers are deployed with a powered up kite. With the ultra handles the brake leader slides through the handle on deployment which means the killer line can be much shorter. I found that I could forget I was wearing killers and concentrate on flying – major bonus! Deploying the killers was pleasing as there was reduced snatch – this would relieve the stress on your wrist and also on the killer material making broken killers less likely – another major bonus! I also found that sorting line twists you always get when using killers was far easier as the killer line was less likely to get in the way.

All good so far – next session out I flew a kite on convention handles and then swapped to Ultra's – BIG difference, like flying a different kite, or flying in much better conditions. I cannot stress enough how relaxed and natural these handles feel in use.

Other people who used the prototypes were also positive and I also had the opportunity to let some novice kites try them. These two had not flown a kite before, I set them up on a small safe(ish) kite with conventional handles and obviously they ended up with big grins – then swapped the handles for the Ultra's and asked them what they thought. They both said that the Ultra's were MUCH better – this was a pure unbiased view and I think it says a lot.

There must be a downside to this. Well I couldn't find fault with the looks or performance while free flying, 100% good. Hooked in flying was not tested so I can't comment. Handle wrapping was not tried so again I can't comment although I can see some obvious problems if I use my current technique. The only problem some had was that the killer line sometimes tugged on the wrist at full extension of the handle (brakes fully off). I think this is down to flying style and can be addressed with tuning of the brake length or killer line length (or solved with the production bungee killer lines). I would have liked parking loops.

You cannot compare these handles to anything else on the market at present; it will be very interesting to see how the competition reacts as I'm sure HQ is on to a winner here.

Two words to sum up – natural and relaxed

Oh yeah – they would look awesome in carbon fibre

Author : [johnkiteman](#)

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.: Member Comments

.: THE FIFTH [13:04:00 on 23 April 2006]

Great review JKM. Really makes me want some as I am teaching the wife to fly but she doesn't like the leader between her fingers. These would be great.

.: Martin_R [18:20:00 on 23 April 2006]

John, nice review on what are very nice handles. I had the opportunity to try a set of these the other weekend at sixfields 2006 on trucknuts MacBego 600 & they felt so natural it was unbelievable. I found the the most comfortable to put my thumb was on the back of the crook section, this may come from my experiences of flying Revs. Although i never actually used the killers i think that the lines between the cuffs & the back of the the handle could be doing with being just slightly longer & made of bungee rather than the present rather thin looking cord.

.: johnkiteman [19:55:00 on 23 April 2006]

@Martin - I think bungee will be present on the production models :)

.: Lee [21:19:00 on 23 April 2006]

great review john, they sound really good and i wish i could get hold of some now as i'm in need of two sets of handles and don't want to fork out wasted money on flexi's. Anyone know when they're due out? Lee

.: **johnkiteman** [22:55:00 on 23 April 2006]

@Lee - pretty soon I think :)

.: **archkiter** [02:20:00 on 24 April 2006]

nice review JKM. I can wait to get my hands on a pair of these!

.: **samkitelad** [08:59:00 on 24 April 2006]

one thing i want to say is they don't feel right to me as i have very small hands and if i put my thumb on top of these handles my hand is to far up to get any brake on

.: **Beefy-stu** [13:54:00 on 24 April 2006]

Great Review JKM I saw these at 6fields, they look like a good inovation, I didn't try them so can't comment on what they feel like. If they had some sort of hook on them like you find on bars that might be a good thing for winding up the lines

.: **Jerry** [00:43:00 on 28 April 2006]

For the record the bungee is likely to be similar to the type used on Flexifoil killers. The concertina sleeved type stretches fairly evenly then stops sharp at it's limit, so regular bungee is arguably better as this effect is much less

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