

DRONE FLYING RULES FOR AUSTRALIA



YOU MUST NOT FLY YOUR DRONE HIGHER THAN 120 METRES ABOVE GROUND LEVEL

The most common question asked about this rule is an attempt to qualify what is "ground level".

This is not defined as "sea level", but the ground at which the drone will be taking off from.

For example, if you are out in the bush and at sea level, then it means you can fly to a height of 120 metres.

If however you are on a hillside and the height above sea level at the point of takeoff is 60 metres, you can fly to a height of 180 metres ABOVE SEA LEVEL but only 120 metres higher than where you are taking off from.

The altitude of your drone should be prominently display on your controller / smartphone.



YOUR DRONE MUST ALWAYS BE MORE THAN 30 METRES FROM OTHER PEOPLE

This is pretty straight forward.

It means that your drone must always be 30 metres away from another person both laterally (horizontally) and vertically (above them).

This obviously does not include the drone operator.

Drones that allow the use of goggles for a point of view (POV) of what the drone sees, in some countries must, as well as the operator, have a spotter who can see the drone in line of sight.

However, technically these type of drones (such as the [DJI Avata](#)) are not allowed to be flown in open air in Australia.



YOUR DRONE MUST ALWAYS BE WITHIN LINE OF SIGHT

Maximum distance to drone manufacturers is a bit like the old wars between camera manufacturers about who had the biggest number of megapixels or digital zoom.

However, whilst your drone might be rated as having a range of 15Km or even more, you are not allowed to fly it out of line of sight without the proper certification.

In other words, in Australia at least, you must be able to see your drone with the naked eye at all times whilst flying.



YOU MUST NOT FLY OVER OR ABOVE PEOPLE OR IN A POPULATION AREA EG BEACHES, PARKS SPORTING EVENTS

This rule ties in with the 30 metre rule, but adds the proviso of where you can fly.

It may be tempting to send your drone over the top of your youngster's soccer match to shoot the action below or fly over a motor racing track to get some high speed footage,, but in both these cases, you would be breaking the rules.

The reasoning is quite simple; if your drone fails, even a 250g model falling from a height would seriously hurt someone.

Additionally, if you send your drone over an event such as a motor race, it is more than possible there are helicopters there filming for television and so you place additional danger on the helicopter crew and anyone on the ground.



IF THE DRONE WEIGHS MORE 250G YOU MUST FLY AT LEAST 5.5KM FROM A CONTROLLED AIRPORT

Even a small drone hitting an aircraft could cause catastrophic circumstances.

The better drones such as those from DJI have both geofencing built in that should stop you taking off too near an airport, as well as aircraft detection to warn you if an aircraft is approaching (using transponder technology).

But like all the rules, this is mostly common sense.

If in any doubt, simply don't fly. And if you hear or see an aircraft in the immediate vicinity, land as soon as possible or at worst, get down to a low height to minimise any collision.



YOU MUST ONLY FLY DURING THE DAY AND NOT IN CLOUD OR FOG

This is pretty straight forward and is linked to the line of sight rule.

In order to fly at night you need special certification and permission (at this stage).

And while it is obvious that in cloud or fog, you'd also not be able to see your drone within line of sight with the naked eye, another consideration is that the moisture contained in the clouds or fog could affect your drone's operation causing it to crash.

At best, this would be an expensive exercise, and at worse, cause major property damage or even hit someone.