

DV Sportster

Stabilizing Arm/Vest Manual



DV Sportster shown with VariZoom FlowPod and UltraLite

Thank you for purchasing the new DV Sportster. Please read the instruction manual thoroughly before operating it for the first time.

The DV Sportster was designed to transform your FlowPod, UltraLite, or other handheld stabilizer into a fully supported system. Included with the package are the vest (w/ arm bridge), spring arm, spool adapter for the UltraLite handle, adapter post for mounting either the Steadicam Jr. or Glidecam handheld units, and the padded carrying case.

Although it is fairly easy to set up the DV Sportster, ***you must know how to use the handheld stabilizer before you get started***, so read the instructions for the handheld unit first, if necessary. Operating the full system smoothly will require practice.

The DV Sportster is covered by a 1 year parts and labor warranty.

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The Vest

The purpose of the vest is to comfortably distribute the weight of the camera and stabilizing system on your body. To achieve optimal results, you should adjust the vest so that it fits snugly. It's probably best to start with the chest plate extended upward at least 4-5 notches. To do this, pull the stainless steel release pin and slide the plate up until you find the right notch, then let the pin lock into place. Clip one of the side straps to the side buckle on the chest plate and one of the shoulder straps to one of the top buckles, then slide the vest onto your body and snap in the other buckles. See picture at right.



Adjust the top straps to the proper length and slide the chest plate up or down until you find the right position.



Adjust the tightness of the vest around your waist and hips using the Velcro strap, drawing it around evenly on both sides of the lower vest pad.

Adjust the tightness around your torso by reeling in the side straps. Make the vest as tight as possible to maximize operational quality and comfort. Once you've adjusted the vest, remove it for easy re-suiting by unclipping the buckles and strap on one side only.

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Operation Notes

Generally speaking, you have to keep in mind that the stabilizer will not work like a magic wand and instantly transform your shots into brilliant footage. Operator skill is critical, and it takes many hours of practice to master this device, but the reward for all the practice will be substantial. Here are a few simple quick-start guidelines:

- Controlling the orientation of the sled is essential, so find the best control point on the sled, in close proximity to the gimbal.
- Grasp the control point lightly with only your thumb and forefinger – do not grab it like a handlebar.
- Practice good posture and hold the sled fairly close to your body.
- Your other hand may be put to use in controlling the rounded base section of the arm where it mounts to the bridge, but this is up to your discretion.
- Fine-tuning of the balance adjustments may be necessary on occasion.
- The way you walk will affect the quality of stabilization, so you will need to develop a light-footed rhythmic pattern, and you may find that a sideways step works better.
- Practice for at least 20 hours before attempting to acquire usable footage.
- Seriously - practice, practice, practice.

For more info, visit
<http://www.varizoom.com/flowcam/dvsportster.php>

Adjusting the Arm

The next step is to set the “float point”. This is essentially the ideal point of spring tension, the state in which the sled rises and falls with slight force. At the end of the arm you will find a 3-prong knob for adjusting the spring tension. Clockwise turning increases tension while counter-clockwise turning decreases tension. You should adjust the tension until the camera base floats at a level below your collarbone, but the arm should not feel “spongy”.

Typically, the arm should be at or above the horizontal position, and you should adjust the tension to a point that minimizes bounce. The float point is not necessarily an exact setting, and you may find that what works for you may be slightly different than another person’s preferred float point. The important thing is the end result: you have a sled that rises and falls with slight force and absorbs most of the shock imparted by walking.

The Handheld Stabilizer, or “Sled”

On a professional stabilizer, the “sled” is the subsystem that holds the camera, viewing monitor, and battery. With the DV Sportster, things are a bit more simplified, as your handheld stabilizer will become the sled, and your camera has an onboard monitor and battery power. In tandem with the spring arm, the sled creates a stabilizing or floating effect by keeping the camera level, absorbing shock, and allowing smooth panning action.

The basic principles of sled adjustment are that you want the section of the sled below the pivot point to be effectively heavier (slightly) than the upper section, and you want the camera’s mass to be centered on the rotating axis. The vertical and horizontal balance you need to achieve with the sled should be explained in the instruction manual of your handheld stabilizer.

For the DV Sportster, you want to keep your sled and camera as light as possible, so try to minimize the total weight. Following the instructions in your handheld stabilizer manual, balance the unit with the camera mounted before proceeding.

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The Arm
Mounting the Arm to the Vest

The spring arm absorbs the shock caused by walking, gives vertical support for the weight of the camera/sled assembly, and helps to create the floating effect. It connects to the vest by means of the arm bridge, a 6.75" black bar that is fixed to the vest and has an upward facing stainless steel post at the other end. Connect the spring arm to the vest by sliding the rounded socket onto this stainless steel post.



Setting up the Arm Mount for the Sled

*The spool adapter for the UltraLite comes mounted in place at the top of the arm, opposite of the 3-prong adjusting knob at the base (see picture below left). If you will be using the Sportster with an UltraLite, then all you have to do is remove the foam grip from the handle and slide the handle into the spool. See pictures below for illustration.



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**If you will be using it with a FlowPod, you will need to remove the spool adapter from the yoke by unthreading the retaining screw and sliding the spool out (save it just in case). Then push the foam grip of the FlowPod down at least 1.5", accordion style, so that the groove on the handle will slide into the yoke (don't fold or roll the foam grip – it might tear). Finish by replacing the retaining screw, threading it in completely.



Finish by replacing the retaining screw

***If you will be using a Steadicam Jr.® or Glidecam® handheld stabilizer, you will need to replace the spool with the adapter post. Figure out which end fits into the bottom of your handle and then insert the adapter post into the yoke with the correct end facing up. Replace the retaining screw, threading it in completely.



Steadicam Jr.® mounted on post

Glidecam® mounted on post