

PILOT/CONTROLLER COMMUNICATIONS



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Congratulations Alex and welcome to the ranks of certificated Private Pilots. You now have a license to learn. As a noted aviation educator loves to say, “a good pilot is always learning”. Welcome to this month’s presentation on Pilot/Controller Communications.

What's the secret to effective communications?

There's really no secret, just some best practices that will make you sound like a pro. We need to start with the basics.

- Standard phraseology, we all need to speak the same language.

Phraseology Resources

- AIM (Aeronautical Information Manual)
- Pilot Controller Glossary
- AOPA Online Training Courses

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- Air Traffic Procedures 7110.65 “ATC Bible”

Chapters of Special Interest

- Chapter 2: General Control
- Chapter 3: Terminal
- Chapter 4: IFR
- Chapter 5: Radar
- Chapter 7: Visual
- Chapter 10: Emergencies

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- Keep it as concise and simple as possible. KISS
- Know exactly what you want to say before keying the mic.
- Position the mic as close to your lips as possible.
- Listen for an opening before keying your mic, especially on initial check in.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Use “chunking” in your transmissions.
- On initial check in full call sign, abbreviated call sign subsequently.
- Use standard format: Who you are calling, who you are, where you are, what you want.
- Cold call not so much info, just the first two Ws.

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- Be patient, controllers can be very busy with multiple frequencies and land lines.
- Actively listen to the frequency, not in one ear out the other. This will aid in maintaining frequency/situational awareness.
- Listen for readback errors by both pilots and controllers, good active listening practice.
- Let controller know exactly what you want, be as specific as possible.
- Gauge how busy the frequency is before asking for too much.
- Be courteous and friendly, not robotic. You get more with honey.

So how do we train ourselves to sound like a radio pro?

- Listen to liveatc.net
- Monitor scanners
- Practice writing down clearances and making readbacks
- Simulators
- Pilotedge.com
- Chair flying
- Utilize flight following as often as possible (emergency) and
- RELAX

Clearance Format

- As pilots we are familiar with CRAFT. Controllers use something similar when issuing clearances FRAHE.

C	F	Clearance limit or fix, usually and airport
R	R	Route of Flight
A	A	Assigned Altitude, may include altitude to expect
F	H	Frequency/Holding instructions
T	E	Transponder code/Expect further clearance time

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- **PIREPS:** have a PIREP form on hand and use the printed format when make a report.
- **Flight Plan Form:** same goes for a flight plan when calling one in to Flight Service. They will need all the information required. ATC will not need all the info because they will enter an abbreviated flight plan.

Additional Tips

- Read back all numbers when issued a clearance, provides verification. Try to avoid using WILCO and never use ROGER.
- If you're not sure, “say again” or “please repeat last” are a must. Don’t guess.
- Write clearances down, including frequencies and altimeter settings.
- Don’t delay frequency changes.
- If you are unable to comply advise ASAP for amended clearance.
- Don’t let controller talk you into something you are uncomfortable with. Remember you are the PIC.

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- If you need more time to setup for an amended clearance request delaying vectors or a hold.
- Confess if in an emergency situation, you will become priority number **ONE**.

Communication Problems

- Be alert to sounds or the lack of them on the frequency.
- Watch your mic, stuck mics stink. We've all done it.
- Keep last frequency in standby of active radio.
- Review lost communication procedures.

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Remember controllers are human too, most of the time. They are there to help us as much as possible. So, relax and speak the language of flying. Thanks for your attention and patience. If you have any questions feel free to accost me at any time. Until my next boring presentation, Mike Keaveney out.