



Fly-in Safety Checkup

Before preflight

- Check your logbook for recent experience. Does it give you confidence in your ability to handle high-density operations? If friends or family flew in with you, make sure your currency to carry passengers won't expire a few days later during the trip home; ATC will neither appreciate nor honor a request for three touch and goes in the pattern.
- Flying nearly nose-to-tail with other aircraft calls for proficiency in maneuvering and slow flight. Has it been a while since you've practiced these skills?
- Obtain all available fly-in procedures. AOPA Expo, AOPA Fly-In and Open House, Sun 'n Fun, EAA AirVenture, and all large events distribute notams with procedures you will be expected to follow.
- Get airport diagrams, not only for your intended destination airport, but also for other nearby airports, in the event of a diversion. AOPA members can download and print free airport diagrams from the *AOPA Airport Directory Online* (www.aopa.org/members/airports).
- Read the AOPA Air Safety Foundation's *Collision Avoidance Safety Advisor*, (www.aopa.org/asf/publications/sa15.pdf) for tips on scanning for traffic.
- Fly-ins almost always require short-field, accuracy landings, with crosswinds sometimes thrown in for fun. Your favorite CFI can help prepare you for these challenges.
- Bring your own tie-downs, and keep the aircraft secure with a properly tied knot. For a quick refresher, read "Tying the Knot" in the October 2004 *AOPA Flight Training* (www.aopa.org/members/ftmag/article.cfm?article=5108).
- Passengers can be a big help, especially with navigation and spotting traffic. If willing to help, brief them on their duties *before* jumping into the airplane so everyone knows his or her part.

Preflight

- Because of the traffic congestion around fly-ins, the flight might be longer than expected. Be prepared by bringing along provisions for those in-flight bathroom breaks.
- Plan for plenty of fuel. Don't expect to arrive as scheduled because you may be required to hold for extended periods of time or advised that you are aircraft No. 23 in sequence to land. Planning a fuel stop an hour short of the destination is good insurance.
- File a flight plan and add 30 minutes to your ETA to help cover any delays encountered. There's often a FSS available at the larger fly-ins to help you close your flight plan.
- If the weather is forecast to be IFR, be current *and* proficient. Know the IFR arrival procedures. If IFR persists and you're not instrument rated, change your plans and drive to the show.
- Don't count on getting a pop-up IFR clearance – most fly-ins have a slot reservation system, and you won't be able to get in if you haven't scheduled in advance.
- A thorough preflight for a fly-in requires special attention to external lights: strobes, nav lights, landing lights, and others.
- Organize the cockpit. This will help out immeasurably in the hectic times of the arrival. Show your passengers where critical items (instrument approach charts, VFR sectionals) are located so they can help during the flight.
- If you're equipped with GPS, program any applicable waypoints for the arrival. You may also create user-defined waypoints of arrival procedure landmarks to help get you to the right place.



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En route

- Use the buddy system. Delegate responsibilities to your passengers – practice crew resource management or, if flying solo, single pilot resource management.
- Use the airlines' "sterile cockpit" procedure by prohibiting all conversation not related to flying duties starting 30 to 40 miles from your destination. Increase your vigilance in looking for other traffic – the skies get as congested as the mall parking lot the day after Christmas.
- Keep tabs on your fuel. The AOPA Air Safety Foundation recommends having at least an hour of fuel left in the tanks (*after* shutting down in your parking spot) — this is especially important for fly-ins. Be prepared to divert should you start dipping into your one-hour reserve – *no cheating!*
- Listen to the ATIS as far out as possible to make the most of your landing preparation time.
- Turn on all exterior aircraft lights prior to entering the arrival phase.
- You have two ears and one mouth. Use them in that proportion on the radio, and be aware that you may be instructed to wait for ATC to contact you. This avoids any unnecessary radio calls and frees up the airways for essential communications.
- Remember: "*Monitor* the frequency," means no talking.
- Be prepared to turn your transponder off, (ATIS and the notam will advise when this is required). Large fly-ins have too much traffic in the same area for transponders to be effective.
- Use the relatively calm portions of your en route phase to review the arrival procedures.

Landing

- Set your minimum safe airspeed on final, and don't be pressured into flying any slower than that under any circumstances. *No stalling allowed!*
- You may be asked to land on a certain spot, e.g., land on the big orange dot on the runway. You'll be thankful for all that precision landing practice you did earlier. If you cannot land on the designated spot, advise ATC and ask for alternate instructions. If you're in trouble, remember the magic word, "unable."
- Maintain directional control and keep your head up. Save peripheral tasks (raising flaps, after landing checklist items, and others) until you're off the runway.
- Watch for ground handlers on or near the runway – they are there to give you after-landing directions.

After landing:

- You will be asked to get off the runway as quickly as possible – be aware that this may mean turning off into the grass, not a taxiway. Stay safe by maintaining directional control and turning off as soon as practical.
- Watch your speed during the exit. Follow instructions to "expedite," but remain safe as well.
- Be aware that most pavement parking spots are reserved or are on a first-come-first-served basis – expect to park on grass. Usually, pavement is reserved for big, expensive kerosene burners.
- If taxiing a tricycle-gear on the grass, keep the yoke all the way back to help keep the nose wheel from digging into the ground.
- Be aware that your aircraft isn't an ATV. Five-inch wheels don't always do well in the grass, so be careful where you taxi.
- Maintain vigilance to avoid mishaps such as paint swapping or wingtip rash. Keep your head up, and ask your passengers to look for hazards.



The show's over — time to head home

Fly-in departure: on the ground

- Review the departure procedures, and follow all instructions.
- Be kind to others when starting your aircraft. If others are behind you, push your aircraft (ask others to help, if needed) into the taxi area, and turn it 90 degrees to save others from your propwash.
- Set avionics, including programming the GPS, prior to departure – then remember to listen *before* talking.
- Be on the lookout for ground handlers and follow their directions.

Fly-in departure: in flight

- Know what is expected; *listen to and follow all ATC instructions*. An extremely high-density environment is no place for showing off your creativity.
- Realize the skies will still be busy for a considerable distance from the airport – keep your head outside the aircraft, and ask your passengers to help look for traffic. This is *not* the time for any “heads down” activities like programming the GPS.
- Save the congratulations until you’re 30 to 40 miles from the airport. It may seem like a long way, but you’re not free and clear until you’re far, far away from the fly-in airport.