

The little things©

Safety in flying is made up of many aspects large and small. It is the small aspects that reoccur most often and have the greatest probability of not being in a pilots repertoire. What follows is a collection of small things that I do and teach because I have found them of safety value. Where a reason or justification may be required I will explain.

Except for the fortunate few, the cost of flying is a major deterrent. If money becomes part of the problem the potential pilot has compounded his learning difficulty. Even the most economical of flying clubs will take money like a sausage grinder. If you are not resigned to this expense and flow, wait. Have the funds set aside and readily available. After money, the student pilot must have time. You will learn faster and safer if you fly frequently. Daily is best only if you have sufficient time to keep the book work caught up. Minimum flights can vary from two to three according to the phase. Any less frequently will limit the efficiency of the process.

Get on the government mailing list. Their advisory circulars are mostly free as is the NASA 'callback'. Addresses on the internet. FAAViation News at \$16 is a good buy as is Flight Training (6 months free to students), Get all the back issues you can. Many government texts related to flying can be obtained at the public library.

Begin your flight training in the Fall. Weather problems will help you develop awareness of the local conditions that both affect your ability to fly well and determine whether you should fly at all. By beginning now you will develop the experience and judgment to make safe decisions. By the time such weather next comes around you will have had an extended period of good weather to improve your flight proficiency.

Use a full size cassette tape recorder with a patch cord into the intercom to record all your ground instruction, radio procedure practice, ATC radio communications, and the flight instruction as it occurs in the cockpit. Such a system eliminates engine noise. As a student you will be surprised at how much communication occurs without your being aware of what is said and especially its significance. It is equally important that a pilot know where other aircraft is in relationship to his aircraft as it is to know where he is.

You will improve your awareness by plotting your flight on to an airport and then locating the position and arrival direction of incoming aircraft. Departing aircraft can be plotted as well. This three dimensional chess game is played by ATC and pilots must learn to play the game as well. The sooner you start using the radio, the better.

On arrival at the airport I feel the wind, look at the flags and windsock. I want to develop my skill in judging winds where the ATIS or AWOS provides a reference check. I may need that skill where no references are available. By waiting to copy the ATIS/AWOS until the engine is started you will learn to copy it under adverse conditions such as will be required on your return. Nothing focuses the attention as well as something costing you money.

On preflight besides the things usually on the aircraft checklist I always roll the tires because the cord may be showing on the bottom. One cord layer missing uses up a lot of safety. Additionally, you have learned that a tire of improper inflation is deemed unairworthy

by the FAA. A tire gauge is part of your flight kit. If in the starting process a student fails to check the belt attachments of the instructor, at some point during the takeoff the door seems to open.

Taxiing on the line gives me the greatest margin of clearance. I am considerate of other pilots by taking the smallest space in the runup areas that I can. During taxi and run-up I have my mixture leaned since it is a little known manufacturers recommendation. After runup, I position my aircraft to see both the approach and base legs prior to taking the runway.

I climb at trimmed Vy and at 300' AGL I check for runway alignment by letting go of the yoke and turning my head. Above 300' I do shallow banked 30 degree turns or Dutch rolls both to help seeing and being seen. Above the pattern altitude I enter a cruise climb when I plan to climb above 3000' AGL for improved cooling and visibility. Any lower flights are always flown to one side or the other of even 500s and 1000s which makes it possible to see and avoid. Once you start doing this you will soon realize the advantages along the busy flyways. Make a practice of flying to the right side of roads and valleys. Avoid VORs and other navigational aids, especially those that are part of IFR approaches. The lower the visibility the more important this last becomes.

The making of turns is one of the first four basics a pilot learns. Small safety factors that exist in this basic should be as much a feature of the performance as the turn itself. When making a series of turns, make the first turn to the left. Why? Because any passing traffic from your vulnerable rear is supposed to be passing on your right. Make a practice of saying, "clear right/left; turn right/left" when you first learn and continue the practice for you flying life. Those with you have a right to know your safety practices are in place.

When you depart home field VFR you never have absolute assurance that you will be able to return VFR. Make a practice of seeking out the minimum safe altitudes that can be flown from any direction. You must know where the power lines are, where the roads lead, where the antenna are, and all the major identifiable points within 15 miles of home field. And when you can't sneak in SVFR, know where the large airport with radar assistance lies as well as the best small airport may be.

When you have a problem, call for the first help you can declaring an emergency too early is less likely to get you into FAA type trouble than doing it too late. Given enough time ATC can find you, guide you, and in some instances land you. Your responsibility is to provide the required time.