

Wachusett Barnstormers

Tips & Hints for Beginner and Novice Pilots

- Roll test steering in a driveway or basement. If it doesn't roll straight at home, it won't roll straight on a runway. Set control to the least sensitive position.
- Put Monokote (or otherwise) small marks at the C.G. (Center of gravity) on the wing to indicate balance location. Makes it easy to check at field.
- Balancing laterally (side to side) will help aircraft track better in maneuvers. Hold at spinner and tail. Add wing tip weight as necessary.
- Check receiver battery every 2-3 flights. Make a chart of how long you have flown vs. Voltage drop. Do not operate below 4.9 volts.
- Always turn on transmitter 1st, receiver 2nd. Always turn off receiver 1st, transmitter 2nd.
- Range check your system before 1st flight every time out. This should be performed with engine running at both idle and full throttle.
- When using the buddy box system, make sure both boxes are set identical. Never turn buddy box power "on"!
- Remove transmitter neck straps when starting engines.
- If you don't have a starter, at least use a "chicken stick". Do not hit it against the propeller; start your flip with the stick next to it. (Touching)
- Never jamb a running starter onto the spinner. Back up the propeller, and place the starter cone against spinner before turning on.
- When you start your engine, look at your watch and keep track of time. After flight, check fuel level to judge maximum available flight time.
- Do not reach over propeller to adjust needle valve do it from the rear of the propeller. Do not position yourself (or others) to the side of a rotating blade. It could fail on run-up or kick up debris.
- Taxi while holding "up elevator".
- Fly with a copilot/spotter.
- Never practice maneuvers at low altitude. Fly 2-3 mistakes above the ground.
- When trimming an aircraft in flight, trim only until it stops the incorrect movement. Trying to correct entirely will only put it out of trim to the opposite direction.
- Most trainer aircraft will recover from unusual attitudes (mistakes) by killing the power and pulling up elevator (depending on altitude). Be ready to level out and apply power.
- Remember, unless you are "dead stick", you do not have to land. If it's not right, go around. It's much easier, and safer, to do it over rather than try to salvage a bad approach.
- If you get nervous for any reason, climb out and do some horizontal figure eights over the field. When you calm down, try again. Don't push yourself to try again too soon. Take your time.
- Do not fly too far away as it is easy to get disorientated. This is especially true when the sun is low on the horizon and the aircraft becomes a silhouette.

- If you are using dual rates, return to high rate before entering the landing pattern. Do a couple of turns to adapt to the greater sensitivity again.
- On flat bottom wing trainer planes: Low speed handling (banking characteristics can be improved by raising each aileron an 1/8" or so. It makes the "up" aileron more effective.
- Installing larger (3"+) wheels on your trainer will:
 - 1) Make taxiing in grass easier.
 - 2) Improve your visual orientation in the air.
 - 3) Improve your landings as gear won't bend as easily.
- Maintain your flight path. Do not make any erratic maneuvers to avoid faster, more maneuverable overtaking aircraft (experienced pilots etc.). It is their responsibility to avoid you. However, make a conscientious effort to not be a hazard either.
- If it is obvious that you are going to crash, kill the power to minimize damage.
- If for any reason an aircraft is in trouble and headed for the pit area or spectators: Do your best to kill the power and ditch it. Don't try to save it. Planes are cheaper than people. It's a small sacrifice to make.
- If your aircraft does go down in the field or trees-Don't move! Note where you are standing, and pick a far distance reference point or object. Follow a straight line in your search and rescue effort.
- If you are searching in the trees, listen to aircraft overhead to orient yourself to the flight line and runway. It's a jungle out there.
- When you do recover a crashed aircraft, be sure to pick up every last part, piece and splinter. You'll be glad you did when you decide to rebuild it after the shock wears off. All those little pieces can be glued together to make templates to create replacement parts.
- After each flight, immediately reset the elevator trim to the "full fuel tank" position. Otherwise you probably won't remember until you are about 10 feet off the ground on the next take-off. (And headed back down to mother earth!)

Even long after you've soloed, don't be afraid to ask for additional help or instruction. That's what we're here for.