



Training: Bob Juncosa

“Field Etiquette”

No, I’m not talking about saying please and thank you. As important as those things are, that won’t be the focus of this article. Understandably, training tends to focus on flying skills but there are bits of etiquette that are often overlooked in the training of new pilots.

Let’s start right from the beginning.

Starting Up

You are in the pits, your plane is secured nicely in a field stand, and are about to start up a monster multi-cylinder gas fire breather. Some of us are up there in years and assuming that our hearing is still within nominal limits, the unexpected roar of all that horse power can send us into cardiac arrest. So before you flip that beast over, look around, and give out with a courteous “Starting Up.”

Taxiing Out

Whatever your plane is, now that it is started and running smoothly, it’s time to head out of the pit area and onto the nearest taxi way. Look in front of you. See those pilots out there? They have their backs to you and can’t see you coming but they sure can hear you. As you blip your throttle or push it up close to full throttle if you need make it through thick grass, that can sound a lot like a throttle that was accidentally hit. Let the pilots on the flight line know you are coming and in full control by saying, “Taxiing out!”

Entering the Runway and Take Off

By now you have moved alongside the other pilots on the flightline and have taken your position at a flight station. Another “Taxiing out” may be in order if you had to hold for a short period until the runway was clear. As you begin your taxi to takeoff position, be mindful of any pilot that might let you know that he has a situation that will require you to continue to hold. If all is clear, announce that you are, “Taking Off” so that the other pilots, starring skyward, are not concerned about your imminent throttle up.

Once Airborne

Now that you are in the air, your verbal responsibilities remain. Anything that is a deviation from the pattern should be announced. A good example is “Low Pass.” Your plane will be coming lower and slower over the field and closer to the other pilots. The heads up will be greatly appreciated. The other pilots will be sure to stay well above you and they overtake your slower moving plane.

Emergencies

You have high priority in the case of an emergency. Clearly announce a “Dead Stick!” The other pilots should acknowledge it and state that they will be giving you all the sky you need and full access to the runway.

Hopefully, you will make it back to the field and just have a longer walk than usual to retrieve your plane. Announce, “On the Field!” Again, the other pilots should acknowledge with an “OK” tinged with jealousy

because of the magnificent dead stick landing you just executed. If you don't make it back, still announce that you are, "On the Field" as you make your way to where ever your plane is. This time, the "OK" from the other pilots may be laced with empathy. In either case, be sure to let everyone know when you are "Off the Field."

Time to Come In

At some point, it will time to end the fun and come back in. Around the time you are entering the downwind leg, announce, "Landing!" This will give the others plenty of time to make sure they are well out of the way. It is not a bad idea that they acknowledge that they heard you. This will also give taxiing pilots the heads up that they should hold off of the runway. After your perfectly greased landing, let everyone know that you are, "Clear" once your plane is off the runway.

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Other Courtesies

- If you plan on doing a lot of close in 3D maneuvers, let the other pilots know. Avoid doing them "show center" as that is prime sky that pretty much everyone will pass through. Move off to the far end of the runway or well off and high. There should be plenty of sky for everyone. Be mindful of routine traffic as they have priority.
- Gliders and other similar planes can require extra time on the runway and can take quite a while for them to reach altitude away from normal traffic. Give them the time and space they need.

This isn't meant to be an exhaustive list and the actual wording of all of these exchanges isn't important. What is important is that everyone that might be affected by what you are doing know what you are doing. That makes for safer and a more relaxed flying experience for everyone.

Oh, and be sure to say please and thank you.

Happy Landings

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