

# Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight®

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## FLYING LESSONS for March 5, 2026

FLYING LESSONS uses recent mishap reports to consider what *might* have contributed to accidents, so you can make better decisions if you face similar circumstances. In most cases design characteristics of a specific airplane have little direct bearing on the possible causes of aircraft accidents—but knowing how your airplane's systems respond can make the difference in your success as the scenario unfolds. So apply these FLYING LESSONS to the specific airplane you fly. Verify all technical information before applying it to your aircraft or operation, with manufacturers' data and recommendations taking precedence. **You are pilot in command and are ultimately responsible for the decisions you make.**

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### This week's LESSONS

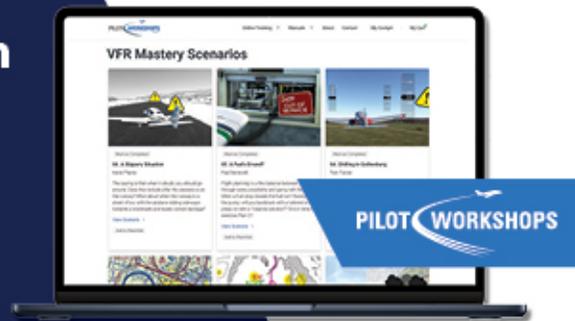
Let's catch up on your comments and insights. To the Debrief!

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### Debrief

Readers write about recent LESSONS:

Reader/instructor Richard McGinnis continues [last week's LESSONS](#) and the past three weeks's discussion on engine failure:

The principle of **reaching a suitable landing site with maximum available altitude** is foundational to emergency training as you stated. Yet in my years of flight instruction, I found that even when pilots managed to arrive over the airport with what appeared to be ample altitude, **most still failed to complete a successful power-off landing**. The gap wasn't judgment about *where* to go—it was **understanding how to get down**.

To address this, I used a standardized training scenario: position the aircraft 2,500 feet AGL over a local non-towered airport, then simulate an engine failure. **Most pilots required at least three repetitions before they could consistently get the airplane onto the runway.**

Two error patterns emerged repeatedly:

1. **The “shortened normal pattern” trap.** Many pilots instinctively tried to fly a compressed version of a standard pattern, complete with base and final. **They underestimated the**

**altitude required for a 180-degree or even a 90-degree turn**, and the result was almost always a landing short of the runway in a clean aircraft.

2. **The “high and aligned” dilemma.** After the first failure, **pilots often corrected by getting aligned with the runway early and with excess altitude to make a normal approach.** While they succeeded in positioning, they lacked the technique—and sometimes the confidence—to shed altitude aggressively and safely. This led to overshooting the runway.

**The Missing Skill Set:** Several underlying issues contributed to these outcomes:

- **Many pilots had never practiced a steep, power-off, high-drag final approach** close to the ground while maintaining proper airspeed. They had practiced the idea of transitioning to best glide speed repeatedly but did not have an SOP to get to the runway. The idea of using speeds other than best glide had not been thought through.
- **The sight picture of a gear-down, full-flap, no-power descent was unfamiliar** and initially unsettling.
- Even those comfortable with the pitch attitude often failed to employ a **forward slip** to control excess altitude.
- The idea of **accepting a tailwind landing—when it was the only survivable option—was rarely considered** because all the literature said this is unacceptable.

The encouraging reality is that **most overshoots would likely have resulted in a survivable runway overrun at low speed.** Still, with structured practice at altitude followed by repetition of the scenario, pilots quickly learned to manage energy, control glide path, and make a normal landing on the runway.

**A Sobering Reminder:** Had our fellow flight instructor [whose accident prompted [last week’s LESSONS](#)] incorporated this scenario into his own recurrent training and SOP list—and practiced it periodically—he and his wife might still be with us today. The *LESSONS* is clear: **mastering the mechanics of energy management in a real engine-out glide is not intuitive.** It must be a priority, taught, practiced, and reinforced.

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-february-26-2026/>

Three standard Airman Certificate Standards (CS) maneuvers—two Commercial checkride tasks, one on the Private and Commercial Practical Tests—can be used to teach these *LESSONS*. Steep, obstacle-clearing [short field landings](#), [Power Off 180s](#) (pulling power to idle on downwind opposite the landing zone and making a steep, power-off glide to landing) and [Power Off 360](#) approaches (in which the pilot makes a full 360 degree power off gliding turn to a landing). Thanks for providing much to think about, Richard.

See:

<https://www.boldmethod.com/learn-to-fly/maneuvers/how-to-fly-a-short-field-landing/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFgKpmg6pwc>

[http://12charlie.com/Chapter\\_8/Chap08Page028.htm](http://12charlie.com/Chapter_8/Chap08Page028.htm)

Award-winning flight instructor John Teipen adds:

With the recent discussions about off-field landing techniques and potential causes, I am reminded of a habit that should be part of each preflight preparation. That is to **not put on a headset until after engine run-up**, especially with ANR. Even with all the noise a trained ear might detect the rattling of a loose oil cap, muffler clamp or other abnormality. Modern ANR headsets do a great job protecting our hearing and improving communications, but they can also mask the sounds of potential problems.

Good reminder, John.

Reader Brad Wolansky wraps up what my personal commitments make an abbreviated *FLYING LESSONS* report this week:

I had a nice text conversation with Scott (aka Gunny) [Perdue] regarding his video analysis of the A36 accident [from [last week’s report](#)]. In his video he implores us to **think in advance about**

**how we might handle various emergency situations.** Of course the biggest emergency piston twin pilots have trained and "thought ahead" about is losing an engine. Fair enough. It's an important one.

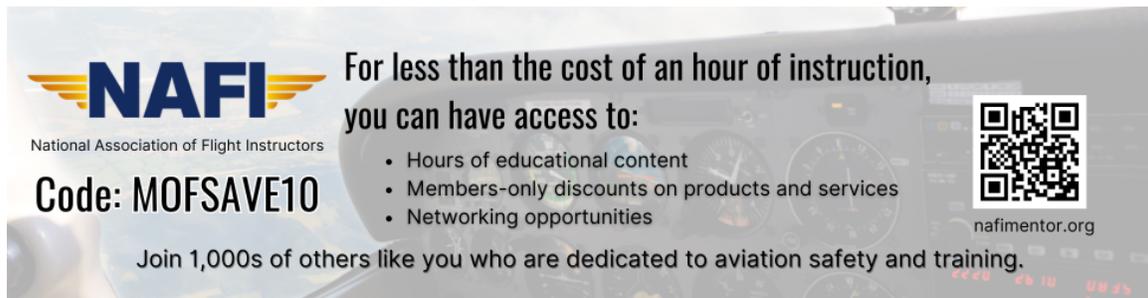
But **what about approaching a field with low or no power?** Specifically, how does lowering the gear fit into the decision tree? I can't remember an instructor ever telling me NOT to lower the gear (if the gear is working). But how about the relationship between lowering the gear and VMC? If I'm approaching VMC or losing altitude controllably, there seems to be an argument for NOT lowering the gear and destabilizing the approach / losing control of the airplane.

In my Seneca, **I get a tremendous slow down (aka loss of airspeed) when that gear drops.** In the A36, the pilot dropped his gear and lost any remaining energy to control the airplane. As I think ahead about what I'd do, perhaps windscreen obstructed, perhaps single engine or worse, and approaching VMC....drop the gear or no? Feels like...no...i.e., use what remaining energy I have to control the airplane to land on the strip on its belly and be able to walk away. Not something anyone has ever trained me to do. You?

As I wrote last week, and in agreement with Scott Perdue, for several years I've been teaching that a controlled, gear-up touchdown should be the default when landing without power. Gear extension at power off glide speed adds roughly 500 feet per minute to the rate of descent. If instead you apply up elevator to keep the rate of descent constant I'd expect to lose as much as 30 knots of airspeed in an airplane like an A36 or a PA-34. Thank you, Brad.

I should be able to devote more time to *FLYING LESSONS* next week. Please accept my apologies for this abbreviated report.

More to say? Let us learn from you, at [mastery.flight.training@cox.net](mailto:mastery.flight.training@cox.net)



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