

Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight®

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FLYING LESSONS for July 2, 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

Are You Good Enough for Oshkosh?

Seven tasks to help you prepare...even if you're not flying into AirVenture 2026

Flying into Oshkosh, Wisconsin's Wittman Regional Airport (KOSH) for EAA AirVenture is an amazing experience. But it's one that requires special expertise, and for you to be at the very top of your game. Come to think of it, we need to be at our very best *every* time we fly. Here are *seven tasks* you must master to **be good enough to fly into Oshkosh...and** avoid the many airport environment losses of control and crashes that happen *everywhere* pilots fly.

Task 1: Know the NOTICE. [The AirVenture NOTICE](#)—not an official FAA NOTAM (Notice to Airmen), EAA's best practices guide for Convention flight operations is a big, busy, 32- page document...and ***you need to know it well*** to be safe flying into what becomes for a while the world's busiest airport. The NOTICE provides rules for visual and instrument arrivals and departures during the days before, during and after AirVenture. It gives instructions for ground operations at the show as well.

See <https://www.eaa.org/~media/2431455452d94e6fa97c7fdd8d2a864d.ashx>

The NOTICE also includes procedures for outlying airports that serve as alternates to Oshkosh arrivals. The NOTICE has changed in some details since last year, so prior experience may not translate directly to safety this year without further study

As you prepare to fly into AirVenture:

- **Download the NOTICE** and begin studying the portions that apply to you...and those that don't. If you're planning to arrive IFR you still need to be fully up to speed on the VFR arrival – controllers can terminate services and direct you onto the visual arrival at any time (that happened to me once; the controller actually informed me, without preamble, "Your IFR clearance is canceled, proceed with the EAA visual arrival procedure.")
- **Keep a copy** of the NOTICE in the cockpit. **Review it at your last stop before Oshkosh**, and when getting ready to depart the airshow.
- **Consider what you'll do** in the event of circumstances such as electrical failure, radio failure and other systems failures; adverse weather at or near KOSH or the arrival corridors, sudden closure of the Oshkosh airport (aircraft emergency or other), arrival near or during air show times or other holds, such as mass arrival reservations, diversion to another airport with its own special NOTICE or NOTAM procedures, and parking saturation – some years Wittman Field fills up and non-show airplanes are turned away.

See <https://www.eaa.org/~media/2431455452d94e6fa97c7fdd8d2a864d.ashx>

Task 2: Fill ‘er up. Don’t plan to arrive at Oshkosh with minimum fuel. We all want to get there with as few stops as possible, and we all want to help the Oshkosh FBOs prosper during the event by buying their fuel. But for safety’s sake, **fly to an airport within one hour of Wittman Field and top off** the fuel tanks before flying the rest of the way in. It’s possible you may have to divert or hold. ***The last place you want to be declaring a fuel emergency is in the traffic pattern with a dozen other airplanes.*** Arrive at AirVenture with plenty of fuel if for any reason you can’t land immediately at Wittman Field.

Task 3: Master airspeed control. Now is the time to brush up on the special skills needed for a safe arrival. One is proper airspeed control. The AirVenture NOTICE calls for most aircraft to fly the visual arrival at 90 knots indicated airspeed. You must **know precisely the combination of power, pitch attitude, flaps, cowl flaps, landing gear position (as appropriate) and trim setting** that results in level flight at 90 knots in the aircraft you’ll fly. **Practice it now**, in the weeks before Oshkosh. Get comfortable with this configuration (and any visibility or engine temperature management considerations that coincide) so you can fly it while scanning outside for traffic inbound to Oshkosh.

If you fly a faster airplane, the NOTICE gives you the option of a slightly higher altitude and 135 knots indicated. If you plan this entry, practice the configurations for *both* 135 and 90 knots. The “high-speed arrival” pilot will eventually have to descend through the “normal” speed as you arrive in the traffic pattern—I had this happen once in a turbocharged Beech Baron twin. When crossing Fisk I was told to descend to the lower altitude pattern, **“number two behind the Stearman.”** Practice precise airspeed and altitude control using NOTICE arrival speeds so you can fly them without thinking about it...freeing you up to handle the traffic and workload of your AirVenture arrival.

Task 4: Master spot, er, dot landings. Getting so many airplanes into the same airport in such a short time calls for unusual procedures. One is that there are multiple touchdown zones – the normal end of the runway, and the “white,” “orange,” “pink” and “green” dots farther down (the specific color depends on the runway in use). You will be directed to land on a specific dot in your landing clearance. **Be extremely proficient at “spot” landings before flying to Oshkosh.** Hit your spot in a short-field technique to avoid rolling into the touch-down zone of an airplane aiming for the dot ahead of yours. **Use a high-angle, constant-descent, obstacle clearing technique** (not “driving level” then chopping power for the last 50 feet). You may be overflying another airplane on the ground or one ahead of you that is aiming at a spot closer to the arrival threshold. **Make your approach as tight (close to the airport) as safely possible.** Nothing throws a wrench in the arrival works like an airplane that extends for a three-mile final. **Practice short-field landings to a designated spot plus no more than 200 feet (Private Pilot short-field standards)** so you can pull one off even **with a crosswind or even a quartering tailwind.**

Task 5: Passenger training. It makes your flight far safer, and a lot more fun, if you take along at least one observer to help you look outside the airplane. **Train your passengers to be observers. The observer’s primary mission is *traffic avoidance*.** Teach observers what to look for, and how to communicate with you. Before you take off for Oshkosh, review some basics such as:

- **The “o’clock” system** of identifying an airplane’s position relative to your own (“12 o’clock high”, etc.);
- **What a typical general aviation airplane looks like at a distance of one mile and half a mile.** You can do this by pointing out other airplanes in an airport traffic pattern on a pre- Oshkosh flight;
- **Descriptions like “high wing,” “low wing,” “biplane,” etc.** Keep it very basic – the Oshkosh controllers will. Prepare your observer for what traffic advisories he/she should expect to hear;
- **How to help find charts, parts of the arrival NOTICE etc.,** that you may need;

- **Landmarks** inbound on the AirVenture visual arrival path;
- How to help you, with **short, precise phrases** like “I see the traffic, three o’clock level”, “you’re left of the arrival course”, “your landing gear is not down”, “you’re 10 knots slow” – whatever you can work out with your observer beforehand;

You might even make up a one-page “observer guide,” with pictures and phrases that apply to your flight, to take along for the arrival.

Task 6: Master crosswinds and tailwinds. Pressed to route as many arrivals as possible into Wittman Field, and with demands from flight demonstrations, air show acts, fly-bys and departures, the superb professionals that work Air Traffic procedures during the event are sometimes forced to route traffic to non-optimal runways, with light-to-moderate tailwind components.

To be **good enough for Oshkosh** you must:

- **Assume you’ll have to go around** unless things work out perfectly.
- **Practice your crosswind landings.** Get really good at them... and more importantly, know your limitations and the limitations of the airplane.
- **Very cautiously try a few landings on a wide runway with a light tail-wind component crosswind.** Note that left-turning tendency of most propeller airplanes means it’ll be harder to maintain control with a wind from behind your left. Get familiar with whether you can land safely with any tailwind component at all, and if so, what tailwind you can safely handle.
- **Develop and adhere to a personal crosswind and personal tailwind component limitation.**

Task 7: Accept or decline. When given an ATC clearance, **it is *your* responsibility** to determine whether complying is safe. If you have any doubts, it is your responsibility as Pilot-in-Command to decline the clearance and request a revised clearance. Pilots don’t like to ask the tower for a runway change. You might not even get it at Oshkosh and have to divert to another airport. At the same time, it’s your safety and that of your passengers at risk. **Don’t delegate the decision to land to Air Traffic Control. It’s *your* responsibility.**

Master the seven tasks now and see if you’re good enough for Oshkosh. If not, ***there’s still time to practice***, or to find a different way to get there. Look at the list of skills at a higher level:

- Thoroughly review **airport procedures and any special procedures** and NOTAMs before any flight;
- **Plan for contingencies** and systems failures;
- **Manage your fuel**, and plan for fuel contingencies;
- **Master airspeed and flight path management**, that is, making the airplane go where you want;
- **Make every landing a precision landing**, even in adverse conditions;
- **Brief your passengers** both for their safety and for them to enjoying being part of the action;
- **Master crosswinds and tailwinds;** and
- **Exercise your Pilot-in-Command authority.** Know **when to say *no***.

If you're arriving in a mass arrival it's even *more* important that you practice and master these skills, because not only do you need precision and accuracy, you'll be arriving in a state of prolonged intentional near-collision in the air and on the runway. This includes being willing to say "no" when needed. Remember, ***there is no provision in the Federal Air Regulations for delegating Pilot-in-Command responsibility to someone in another airplane*** even if they are the "lead."

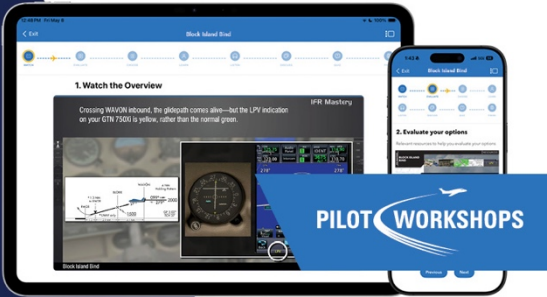
These seven tasks are an excellent exercise for hiring a CFI (who has experience and is current in your airplane type) to explore low-stress, controlled conditions before you're faced with the test at Oshkosh. They **are skills you need to master *any time you fly***, even if you never get near Wisconsin. Make it an **AirVenture-focused Flight Review** by practicing skills you may need at Oshkosh.

Questions? Comments? Supportable opinions? Let us know at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.

What would you do?

The glidepath disappears on an RNAV LPV approach. Would you continue to LNAV minimums? Test your knowledge in this IFR Mastery scenario.

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Debrief

Readers write about recent *LESSONS*:

I was focused elsewhere and did not have much time to generate this week's report. So I hope you'll wait one more week for reader insights and experiences.

More to say? Let us learn from you, at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.



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