

Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight®

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FLYING LESSONS for August 6, 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.**

FLYING LESSONS is an independent product of MASTERY FLIGHT TRAINING, INC.

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This week's LESSONS

Earlier this week I was speaking with my friend and aviation safety fellow traveler Max Trescott, award-winning flight instructor and host of the popular [Aviation News Talk](#) podcast. During our discussion the topic of go-arounds in retractable gear airplanes came up. The conversation reminded me of [a Mastery of Flight® report from a couple of years back](#). I repeat it, slightly updated, now.

See:

<https://aviationnewstalk.com>

<https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-february-8-2024/>

From an FAA preliminary report:

A Beech A35 [T-34A Mentor] "landed gear up and slid off the side of the runway into the dirt...." The two aboard were unhurt and the airplane suffered "minor" damage.

Unofficial witness reports posted on various social media state the vintage military trainer (a US Air Force veteran painted in US Navy colors) made an approach to the runway only to perform a go-around for unknown reasons. When the pilot came around again for another landing the landing gear was not extended, with the all-too-common result.

Multiple trips around the circuit provide the opportunity to fine-tune technique and hone skills. Unfortunately, pattern after pattern can also devolve into distraction and complacency...two factors that often lead to missed actions including a gear-up landing.

Sometimes pilots talk and post online that, when staying in the traffic pattern in a retractable gear airplane you should leave the gear down. The idea is that you won't forget to extend the landing gear if it's already down.

I suggest, however, that altering your gear technique by leaving the wheels down robs you of much of the training benefit of practicing multiple landings. **Every practice landing should reinforce good habits for normal operation** as much as they help you master the flare and touchdown. Leaving the gear down may actually make a gear up landing **more likely** on a later flight by reinforcing behaviors that run counter to normal gear extension and confirmation.

If you put the landing gear down to begin your descent from pattern height by adding drag—**gear down to go down**—you reinforce confirming gear extension by being able to evaluate:

- **Sound.** The gear motor sounds right and runs for the proper amount of time. The slipstream noise changes as expected.

- **Feel.** The airplane pitch changes as expected. The airplane decelerates initially then settles into a descent.
- **Performance.** Attitude, airspeed and vertical speed all are as normally expected. None of these measures of performance are unusual or in conflict with the others.
- **Sight.** Gear indicators confirm proper extension. If the wheels are visible directly or in gear mirrors, they appear fully down and locked.

But if you leave the landing gear down in the landing circuit you don't get the experience of confirming gear extension. In fact, the big throttle reduction needed to begin your descent reinforces bad habits that can mask forgetting to extend the gear.

In its piston T-34B era the U.S. Navy at one time taught its pilots to leave the landing gear down in closed traffic patterns, but later ordered a change to more normal operations—retracting the wheels after takeoff and lowering them again to descend from pattern altitude—after an **increase in gear-up landings** by solo students at remote practice airfields.

Leaving the gear down in the unusual occurrence of a go-around robs the pilot of much of the experience he/she is trying to get when flying trips around the pattern. It **requires an abnormal technique** that I believe runs the chance of making a later gear-up landing in non-training operation more likely.

The same goes for other operations, in fixed gear airplanes as well as retracts. **Practice should reinforce behaviors you want to exhibit in your day-to-day flying. *Train the way you fly, fly the way you train.***

One of witnesses to the T-34 gear up, a senior flight instructor who was preflighting an airplane with a student when he observed the crash, exhibited the FAA-identified hazardous attitude of **resignation** when he wrote:

It happens to everyone at some point. It's just embarrassing. It happened to me while doing a Power Off 180 while I was training toward my complex endorsement 30 years ago, but my instructor told me to go around. I applied full power and tried to raise the gear, but it was already up! Nice not to have to worry about that mistake in my elderly years as a Cirrus instructor.

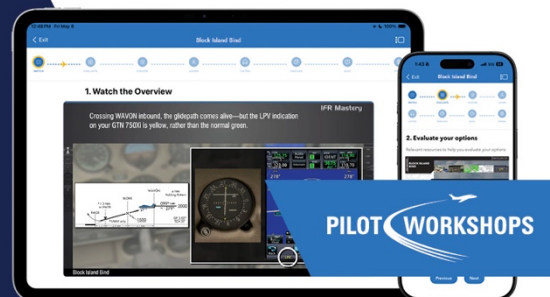
No, it *doesn't* happen to everyone at some point. I prefer to learn from experience, both my own and by learning from the experiences of others, to **replace resignation with determination** to manage risks. **What goes around**—the habits we reinforce—**comes around** when we least expect. Know the scenarios that are most commonly contributors to accidents, and it's more likely you'll follow standard procedures to avoid repeating accident history...in your training too, to reinforce those SOPs in your everyday flying.

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*:

Reader Mike Dolin responds to recent *LESSONS*:

Many years ago, when simple electronic calculators came upon the scene, I wrote an article for the Comanche Society magazine about the use of this new device in the cockpit. I mentioned several handy calculations, but also the idea that using the device makes you become familiar with it.

You never know when a new question arises that needs a calculator to answer, plus calculator comfort eases into familiarization with new devices such as the soon to come along personal computer and cell phones.

Virtually no feedback came from the article. What a letdown.

So I want to assure you that we are reading. Some of us even paying attention. A great big thank you for educating us, Tom.

The reason I'm writing this is because something you wrote recently was an item I never heard before. That being, *Loss of Control is often preceded by loss of pilot in command authority*. Makes perfect sense.

The precise quote is **"Loss of control of an aircraft is always preceded by loss of command of that aircraft."** I learned this brilliant observation from my counterparts in the Cirrus Owners and Pilots Association. Embarrassingly, I don't recall now specifically who made that statement—perhaps one of my COPA friends will remind me. Meanwhile, thank you, Mike. I appreciate you, and all *FLYING LESSONS* readers who join me in the pursuit of **Mastery of Flight®**.

Reader, instructor and Aviation Safety Investigator Jeff Edwards writes about the [July 30 LESSONS](#):

Excellent piece, as usual. After decades of flying into Airventure, I made the decision to fly to Green Bay. Less traffic and less stress. I have experienced the issues you described the last several years and decided the risk was not worth it. Everyone at Airventure— staff, air traffic pink shirts, most pilots do the right thing, but one person doing it "my way" as old blue eyes sang, really poses a tremendous risk to others.

That's one, in some ways unfortunate, way to manage the risk. I hope that next year's AirVenture crowd more closely follows the arrival procedure, for those who do read and follow the NOTAM. Thank you, Jeff.

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-july-30-2026/>

Reader, flight instructor and retired Air Traffic Controller John Foster writes about the tragic accident that served as [inspiration for the July 16 LESSONS](#):

In regards to the tragic Baron accident that you have been discussing:

As a retired ATC guy, I have another why...*why didn't he contact ATC for some additional help?* I know most people will say that ATC cannot fly the airplane for the pilot, but perhaps some guidance away from the worst weather, a suggestion to deviate to a nearby airport, or some other information could have made a difference. Granted pilot workload was no doubt excessive, but a check of local frequencies before takeoff is always a good idea especially at night in unfriendly weather conditions.

I'm betting the "why" is fear of using the E word ["Emergency"]. For goodness sake, pilots should never be afraid to declare an emergency. It's not a big deal, and it could save a situation.

You and I have spoken in the past about my advice: **"BATH"--Be alive at the hearing**. Declaring an emergency is no big deal. I still enjoy your *FLYING LESSONS* after all these years

Thank you very much, John. Good to hear from you again. I think you're correct. There is a hesitancy to ask for help—the pilot culture is all about heroically overcoming emergencies using

your wits and your superior experience, when we really know we should **use experience to avoid needing to heroically overcome**. I believe the greatest benefit of declaring an emergency is putting yourself in the mindset that you must do nothing except what's necessary to get the aircraft safely on the ground as quickly as possible.

In the specific case of the Baron, where reportedly a VFR-only pilot elected to take off for a midnight cross-country flight into an area of severe weather, declaring an emergency may not have changed the outcome. Still, thank you for pointing out the reminder it provides to **use “the E word” without hesitation when needed...** to trigger all the help you can get, and more importantly to put yourself in the emergency mindset. **Be a hero** by getting the airplane safely on the ground.

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-july-16-2026/>

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

A promotional banner for the National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI). On the left, the NAFI logo is displayed in white on a blue background. To its right, the text "JOIN THE NAFI COMMUNITY" is written in yellow, followed by two yellow arrows pointing right. Below this, a paragraph in white text says: "Become a member today and join 1,000s of others like you who are dedicated to aviation safety and training. NAFI members receive exclusive membership benefits." Below the paragraph is the website "More information: nafimember.org". To the right of the text is a red button with a white right-pointing arrow and the text "JOIN NOW". On the far right, there is a laptop screen showing the NAFI website interface, which includes the NAFI logo and a "Welcome to NAFI" message.

See my.nafimember.org

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