



SAFETYGRAM

Mar 2015

The snow is gone, the icicles have fallen from the eaves – springtime must surely be right around the corner! While many of us have ‘hunkered down’ for the winter, the Aero Club aircraft have been well maintained, gassed and are ready to go.

Me, well maybe not so much – for me it is spring tune-up time. I need to go fly with a CFI and get some proficiency back, how about you? I have known and been amazed by some ‘old heads’ that flew infrequently, but very precisely, perhaps you have seen them around too. How do they do that?

I asked. They told me it really boils down to preflight planning – plan the flight and fly the plan - and it works for every flight! But this preflight planning starts long before arriving to brief and fly. Review the appropriate pilots operating handbook and checklist. Aerodynamics is a science – the aircraft can be flown ‘by the numbers’ and will react predictably every time! If you adjust and set the controls according to the POH/checklist you minimize your workload and just have to make minor corrections to deviations. The airplane knows how to fly; you just have to set the controls to get the performance you desire. (You remember Attitude + Power = Performance, right?) Flying by the numbers eliminates the guess work. For every flight maneuver (takeoff, climb, level off, straight and level cruise, turns, airspeed changes, and descent) there is a simple attitude and power setting. Set, monitor, wait, and correct - simple!

After you’ve reviewed the numbers, continue the process for the bigger picture of managing the flight. Got a minute? Mentally review a procedure – usually called chair flying – or an entire flight - let the time you have available be your guide. Driving – what better time to practice clearing; remember to clear high and low; refueling, great time to do a walk around of your vehicle. If there is a simulator available you can do some serious chair flying – and review all of your maneuvers to refresh your mental and muscle memory.

Keep up with the rules and regulations. Has the FAA made any changes, how about the AF and Aero Club (I’m sure you have read the new AFI 34-117 outlining Aero Club operations)? Hangar flying is valuable too. Talk and listen; learn from the mistakes of others; learn how to handle an emergency (or not); hear of changes that others have learned. Fill your ‘flight bag’ with knowledge.

With all of this preflight planning complete it is now time to make the plan – decide what the flight will entail, what the focus will be (patterns, instruments approaches, area maneuvers, etc.) and the sequence of events. Armed with all of this preflight planning (and real time weather/NOTAMS) meet up with your CFI at the appointed time. Brief the plan – your CFI will be impressed and confident of your skills when you lay out your well thought out plan. Accept the CFI may interject events they want you to practice too (perhaps a simulated engine failure).

This preflight planning results in more bang for the buck – maybe I'm 'cheap' but when I have to pay I want to get my money's worth!

With all of your preflight planning complete, you will become one of those 'old heads' that flies precisely every time. When asked you can say, 'it's like riding a bike' or be a great mentor and share your secrets.

Here are a couple of resources you may like to review:

Tune Up your Flying Skills

http://flighttraining.aopa.org/magazine/2007/April/200704_Commentary_Presidents_Perspective.html

Flight Review Prep (FAA Wings program)

https://www.faa.gov/gslac/ALC/course_content.aspx?pf=1&preview=true&cID=25

FLY SAFELY!



Eric Treland, Program Manager, USAF Aero Clubs
jeric.treland@us.af.mil; DSN 969-7240, (210) 395-7240