

Radio Communication Tips

Whether operating at a towered airport or an uncontrolled airfield, the following three things need to be stated during each radio call:

- Who are you?
- Where are you?
- What are doing or what are you Requesting to Do?

Uncontrolled Airport Traffic Pattern Radio Call Examples:

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Departing Runway 18, Remaining in the pattern**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Upwind - Runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Turning Left Crosswind for Runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Turning Left Downwind for Runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Turning Left Base for Runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, Turning Final for Runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

- *State the name of the airport at the beginning and the end of each radio call. It might seem like overkill but remember for the Gainesville area. There could be over 12 airports within radio range on the same radio frequency of 123.0. This helps other pilots who might have missed the first part of your radio call, catch the end of your radio call to identify what airport you are located.*
- *At Uncontrolled Fields, you can shorten your call sign down to as short as you want - Cessna 10U*

The following are examples of radio calls to make when approaching an uncontrolled airport for landing. I always make my first radio call no closer than 10nm away from an airport. I will make radio calls at 10nm, 5nm, 3nm and when either entering the traffic pattern or an additional call for when I'm crossing over an airport to enter the traffic pattern on a 45 Degree Entry.

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, 10 miles North at 3500Ft, inbound for landing runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

Gainesville Traffic, **Cessna 7710U, 5 miles North at 2500Ft, Inbound to enter the 45-degree entry for left downwind for runway 18**, Gainesville Traffic

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Towered Airport Communications

When approaching a towered airport – Listen to ATIS “Weather information” ASAP!

10 miles away make your first radio call, wait for tower to respond to your Tail Number such as

Ardmore tower, Cessna N7710U

Cessna N7710U, Ardmore tower go ahead!

Tower, Cessna N7710U, 10 miles South, 3500 ft, inbound for (type of landing, example – Full Stop, Touch and Go, Low Approach) with information “Foxtrot”

Remember at a towered airport, the Air Traffic Controller controls all traffic. For example, if your approaching the airport from the south, and the winds are out of the north. He can instruct you to enter a long final and come straight in for a landing on runway 35.

If the winds are out of the north and your approaching the airport from the west, they can instruct you to skip a downwind leg and just enter straight into the left base leg for runway 35. Typically, Air Traffic Controllers want to get you to the runway at the shortest route possible.

Cessna 10U, Report Entering Left downwind for Runway 17.

Report Entering Left Downwind for Runway 17, 10U

After Flying and setting up for a left downwind for runway 17, your radio calls should be as followed:

Tower, Cessna 10U is Left downwind for Runway 17, for a (Type of Landing).

Cessna 10U, Your cleared (Type of landing) runway 17.

Cessna 10U, Cleared (Type of Landing) Runway 17.

Remember at towered airports, you need to tell the controller who you are, where you are, and what your requesting to do. They will give you an instruction on what to do, and you need to repeat that instruction back to them to confirm, and then go and execute it. Example:

Tower, Cessna N7710U, Reporting Left Downwind for runway 17.

Cessna 10U, you are cleared to land runway 17.

Roger, cleared to land runway 17, Cessna 10U.

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ATC Terminology

(Option) means it is up to you if you want to make a full stop landing, touch and go, or low approach only.

Cessna 7710U, you are Cleared for the (Option) runway 17.

Cleared to Land – you are cleared for a full stop landing **ONLY**.

Cleared for Touch and Go – You are cleared for a touch and go **ONLY**.

(Closed Traffic) - Which mean to fly a normal traffic pattern without exiting.

Cessna 10U, cleared for Touch and go runway 17, on departure fly Right Closed Traffic pattern and Report Right Base.

Tower – Only controls the aircraft operating in its airspace, and clears aircraft to take off and land.

Ground – Controls movement on the ground whether that's aircraft, maintenance vehicles, mowers, etc.

Clearance Delivery – This is designed mainly for Class B and C airports. You must first contact clearance delivery to get a clearance which will include Transponder Code to use, after Takeoff Instructions (example fly this heading, climb and maintain this altitude), and also a Departure Frequency to contact when climbing out that the tower will tell you to switch to.

Ground Control – Remember that the Ground Controller **ONLY** controls the vehicle movement on the entire airport area, besides the runway. I think of him as a traffic cop at a stop light controlling the movement of vehicles through an intersection.

When starting up the aircraft, complete all pre-taxi checklists then contact Ground Control and tell them... Who are you, where are you, and What do you want to do and that you have the current weather information.

Example. [Ardmore Ground, N7710U, at Lakeland Aviation \(FBO\), Ready to taxi to the active runway, with information November.](#)

N7710U, Taxi to runway 35 via Taxiway Alfa and Charlie.

[Roger, Taxi to Runway 35 via Alfa, Charlie, N7710U](#)

When you land on the runway, try to make the first taxiway to exit. When you clear the runway, make sure you are completely clear and past the hold short line. Then stop and complete your after landing checklist and contact ground control. When contacting ground control, state who you are, where you

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are, and where you want to go. Sometimes when the airport isn't busy, the tower controller will just clear you to taxi to where you want to go and just instruct you to remain on the tower frequency.

Flight Following – Is a service that ATC offers to VFR aircraft to help them with collision avoidance. When air traffic that is picked up by ATC's radar gets close to you, the controller will give you an advisory of the traffics location, direction, and altitude. You can request flight following by contact ground, tower, approach/departure control, or center frequency.

Transponder Codes – A lot of the time when in contact with ATC, they will issue you a transponder code. Example 4345. This will help ATC identify who you are, aircraft, destination, altitude, equipment on board, etc.

When flying around VFR everyday, always just have the code: 1200 in the transponder.

Other Important Transponder codes to memorize:

7700- Emergency

7600 – Lost Communications

7500 – Hijack

When you activate any of these codes. Computers in the ATC system will automatically sound and alert Air Traffic Controllers of the possible situation. For example. If I am at 4000 ft MSL and I have an engine failure, and I put 7700 in my transponder but I am not able to communicate to anyone on my way down, ATC will be alerted and will at least know that an aircraft had an emergency and dropped off the radio in that location.

Tips –

- Always make sure you are cleared to land, and have repeated that back to the tower so there is ZERO confusion. It gets busy in the air, sometimes you just can't remember if your cleared to land, just a simple radio call to the tower can confirm.
- When flying into a towered airport, don't act like you have to beg for permission to do something. Tell the tower you're going to do it, they really don't care unless it's going to be an issue with other traffic. Example....

N7710U, on departure, fly left traffic for Runway 35.

Tower, N7710U we would like Right Traffic for this next pattern.

- The more radio calls the better to uncontrolled fields. If you're not talking, then no one knows your there. It's a pet peeve of mine to be in the pattern with students and the first radio call

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we hear is someone reporting they are entering the downwind leg of the traffic pattern. A 5 mile out radio call is good. But 10 miles out is even better!

- If you didn't understand a pilots or ATC's last Radio Transmission, ask them to repeat it.
- Before making a radio call, wait for there to be silence on the radio. If someone is already transmitting out on the radio, and you begin to do so also. It will block both radio transmissions.
- Make sure your radio volume is up, headset volume is up, your microphone is close to your mouth, and your intercom is set up correctly.
- Air Traffic Controllers are not pilots, and pilots are not Air Traffic Controllers. If I need to do something else besides what they are instructing me to do, to remain safe. Tell them you are unable to comply with their instructions.
- Do not be scared to declare an emergency with ATC. ATC would much rather have you declare an emergency and give you first priority over all other planes, than to not know about your emergency and have you end up dead, and then have to go recover dead bodies from a crash site. Remember, no emergency can be too small. If I need to declare an emergency and my best chance of surviving is landing on the south lawn of the white house, I might make the news, but other than that, I survived and that's all the FAA really cares about.
- 121.5 is the Emergency frequency, but no one with the FAA monitors it. Lots of airline and military pilots will have it active in their standby radio. So, if you have an emergency and you try to contact someone on this frequency. Don't be surprised if you only get a call back from an airline pilot. Better used frequencies would be ATC Center, CTAF, or tower frequencies.
- A quality headset is a good investment. The cheap headsets (Under \$250) most of the time don't cancel out much engine noise and the microphone picks up a lot of the background noise when you make a radio call. You don't have to invest in a \$1000 Bose headset. We have 4 different David Clark Headsets that have worked very well over the past 15 years and are right around \$310 for a set. My brother has had his David Clark Headset since 1997, and its still in excellent shape today and works perfectly. If you have the money, I suggest some sort of noise canceling headset. The more noise you can cancel out, the better for the health of your hearing. With decreased engine noise will mean you will be about to hear ATC or other aircraft better and clearer.

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