

Postflight Briefing #6-1***Hold Everything*****Bruce Williams**

I get lots of questions and comments from folks who argue about the recommended entries for holding patterns. Critics often say, correctly, that the standard entries are just recommendations (and a DPE I know recently pointed out that she can't fail an IFR candidate for not using one of the standard entries).

But here's a defense of using the recommended procedures. It's true that the "recommended" holding entry procedures described in the AIM aren't required and that controllers don't care how you enter a holding pattern (at least I've never talked to one who threw out the high and low scores and awarded points for artistic interpretation after issuing a holding clearance) if you are scrupulous about maintaining your assigned altitude. But the recommended procedures do offer several advantages.

First, they provide common operating practices that instructors can teach to the community of IFR students and aviators. Roll-your-own methods are fine and legal, but if you're juggling several students, picking up students mid-stream, or giving IPCs, using standard procedures certainly makes training more efficient and helps to avoid confusion. Pilots who move to other flight schools and instructors can count on the recommended methods being acceptable wherever

they train and fly. Folks aspiring to airline and other professional careers will usually find that the "recommended" methods are the standards to which they'll be tested during interviews and trained and expected to fly if they're hired.

Next, IFR-approved GPS units and integrated systems like the Garmin G1000 typically provide messages that suggest one of the recommended procedures as you approach a charted hold. Now, the GPS isn't going to set off alarm bells if you look at the picture on the moving map, cross the fix, and then zig and zag your way back into the hold. But knowing how to apply the recommended procedures can still reduce your workload and provide an efficient path into the hold.

And not all entries into holding patterns are assigned as delaying tactics. Many instrument approach procedures, and even some SIDs and STARs, include charted holds that are used for course reversals (i.e., procedure turns) and as safe places to gain or lose altitude during the transition from the en route structure into the terminal environment and vice-versa. ATC doesn't usually drop such holds in your lap at the last minute, and by definition they're on a chart. Using the appropriate recommended procedure is an efficient and predictable way to fly those charted procedures, albeit not the only legally acceptable method. None of the foregoing is to suggest that creative folks can't come up with other methods that meet the basic safety/efficiency criteria. There are many ways to fly, for example, airport traffic patterns. But having standard procedures streamlines training, and, in theory at least, helps everyone in the system operate predictably and more safely.

Bruce Williams (bruceair.com)

Postflight Briefing #6-2***Practice, Practice, Practice...On Your Own***

As an instrument student, you cannot legally file an IFR flight plan (either a paper flight plan or one arranged verbally with ATC). You must be instrument rated to do such a thing. This doesn't, however, preclude you from asking ATC for a practice instrument approach if you'd like to practice your instrument approaches, while wearing a view limiting device in VFR conditions with a safety pilot on board. This allows you to fly an instrument approach in VFR conditions with the safety pilot doing the things you can't do when you're unable to look outside the airplane.

After you've established communication with the appropriate ATC controller, ask for a *practice instrument approach*. These words tell the controller that you aren't filing an IFR flight plan and that you won't be operating in actual instrument conditions. Make sure you tell the controller how you'll terminate the approach (i.e., low approach, full stop landing, executing the published missed approach, etc.).

Of course, this assumes that you are sufficiently skilled to fly the approach you're shooting. In other words, if the controller asks, "2132 Bravo, I show you over the outer marker. Do you concur?" As you key the mic, he doesn't expect to hear the outer marker's beeping sound in the background while you say, "I don't know but I think someone's fries are done."

You must also ensure your instructor agrees that you're ready to practice your approaches with a safety pilot on board. You might also ask if he or she would approve your doing holding pattern practice, too. If it's not too busy, most controllers are more than happy to provide you with holding clearances.

For instance, when my instrument students are ready to practice holding without me on board, I have them call ATC and say something like the following, "SoCal approach, this is 2132 Bravo. I'm an instrument student and, workload permitting, would it be possible for you to give me a few holding pattern clearances at XXX intersection for practice?" But only do this when the controller is obviously not too busy. Although you can fly practice instrument approaches as well as holding patterns solo without wearing a view limiting device, it's always wise to have a competent and qualified safety pilot on board under these conditions.

