

Common Courtesy

It helps to keep in mind that traffic procedures at nontowered airports are advisory in nature, not regulatory. There frequently is more than one way to fly a safe pattern, final approach, and landing. You'll see a lot of different interpretations of the traffic pattern.

- Taking other pilots to task because they don't exactly follow your interpretation of the local procedures is asking for trouble, especially if you lecture the pilot. If you feel the need to discuss a situation, do it on the ground—politely.
- Use courtesy and respect. There can be honest differences of opinion, and we should be far more courteous to one another than most automobile drivers.
- Give the other pilot the benefit of the doubt to compensate for the time when you were the one who may have made an inadvertent error.
- If all else fails, provide the erring pilot with a copy of this Safety Advisor and know that you have made a small contribution to safe pilots and safe skies.

Safety Tip

Think like an air traffic controller when you fly. Controllers try to maintain an orderly, efficient flow of traffic, meaning you'll slow down or extend to accommodate the traffic ahead or alter your normal pattern slightly to conform to the traffic situation.

Appendix

FAR 91.113 (b)-(g)—Right-of-Way Rules: Except Water Operations

(b) General. When weather conditions permit, regardless of whether an operation is conducted under instrument flight rules or visual flight rules, vigilance shall be maintained by each person operating an aircraft so as to see and avoid other aircraft. When a rule of this section gives another aircraft the right-of-way, the pilot shall give way to that aircraft and may not pass over, under, or ahead of it unless well clear.

(c) In distress. An aircraft in distress has the right-of-way over all other air traffic.

(d) Converging. When aircraft of the same category are converging at approximately the same altitude (except head-on, or nearly so), the aircraft to the other's right has the right-of-way. If the aircraft are of different categories—

- (1) A balloon has the right-of-way over any other category of aircraft;
- (2) A glider has the right-of-way over an airship, powered parachute, weight-shift-control aircraft, airplane, or rotorcraft.
- (3) An airship has the right-of-way over a powered parachute, weight-shift-control aircraft, airplane or rotorcraft.

However, an aircraft towing or refueling other aircraft has the right-of-way over all other engine-driven aircraft.

- (e) Approaching head-on. When aircraft are approaching each other head-on, or nearly so, each pilot of each aircraft shall alter course to the right.
- (f) Overtaking. Each aircraft that is being overtaken has the right-of-way and each pilot of an overtaking aircraft shall alter course to the right to pass well clear.

(g) Landing. Aircraft, while on final approach to land or while landing, have the right-of-way over other aircraft in flight or operating on the surface, except that they shall not take advantage of this rule to force an aircraft off the runway surface which has already landed and is attempting to make way for an aircraft on final approach. When two or more aircraft are approaching an airport for the purpose of landing, the aircraft at the lower altitude has the right-of-way, but it shall not take advantage of this rule to cut in front of another which is on final approach to land or to overtake that aircraft.

FAR 91.126 (b)

(b) Direction of turns. When approaching to land at an airport without an operating control tower in Class G airspace—

- (1) Each pilot of an airplane must make all turns of that airplane to the left, unless the airport displays approved light signals or visual markings indicating that turns should be made to the right, in which case the pilot must make all turns to the right; and
- (2) Each pilot of a helicopter or a powered parachute must avoid the flow of fixed-wing aircraft.

FAR 91.127 (b)

(b) Departures. Each pilot of an aircraft must comply with any traffic patterns established for that airport in part 93 of this chapter.

