

THE COMFORT ZONE

PCS Chairman *Jon Cooke* suggests revisiting those manoeuvres that you would least like to perform in the presence of a Flight Examiner as they are clearly the manoeuvres you most need to practice!



JUMPING into your aircraft, you start her up and take off, heading to a familiar spot to circle around for a few minutes prior to returning for a landing back at your base airfield. It's easy to stay in your comfort zone, since that is what you know and do well.

I touched on the subject of revision last month with my article about forced landings, and a 'Record of Revision' to include in your license. All of this is intended to get you to question which of your flying skills most need revising. Which exercises would you least like to perform in the presence of a Flight Examiner? Clearly, those are the manoeuvres you most need to practice!

Those suggested below is not exhaustive, and will vary with pilot and aircraft type. I have included a few typical items which appear in the PPL Skills Test or Proficiency Checks, and some that are at the forefront of safety in GA.

GENERAL HANDLING

General handling is a good place to begin. Steep turns, stalling, practice forced landings, and unusual attitude recovery all form part of those first few hours learning to fly, and form the basis of operating an aircraft safely and competently. You should be

entirely comfortable performing any of these manoeuvres, at any time while flying.

THE CIRCUIT

Circuits have a particular place in a pilot's heart – a bit like Marmite, you either love them or hate them. During PPL training, you become well practiced at normal, flapless and glide circuits. You will also have flown soft field and short field take-offs and landings. These techniques are not used every time you fly, and may eventually become just a note in the 'comments' column of an old log book.

The different types of circuit require a mastery of a number of skills, which is why they form a part of the PPL syllabus. Practicing these on a regular basis will keep you familiar with them in the event that you need to perform one in anger. How comfortable would you be either performing a go-around from the flare, or a rejected take-off in a tailwheel aircraft once the tail is up?

EMERGENCIES

Revision of emergencies is part and parcel of a day in the life of a commercial pilot: pre-flight briefing, simulator checks, fire drills, recurrent training and so on. With a private pilot, it is left to the discipline of the individual to ensure that they are familiar with emergency procedures during the long

gaps between visiting an instructor for their Class Rating Revalidation. Revision doesn't have to be airborne and it doesn't even have to cost anything. Memory drills such as engine fire on start up, engine fire in the air, and EFATO can be practiced on the ground at nil cost. If the weather is not good enough to fly the next time you go to the airfield, sit in the aircraft and practice your memory drills or revise the limitations, or even practice them on a Flight Simulator. Read the Pilot Operating Handbook, or look around your aircraft. Take time to understand how things on your aircraft work, and why – take inspection panels off to have a look. If you don't fully understand, ask your engineer to explain what, why and how things work on your aircraft.

INFRINGEMENTS

Airspace infringement has been highlighted recently, with the addition of listen out squawks and Transponder Mandatory Zones intended to reduce these. Irv Lee has done an excellent job in highlighting the issue of *what* is going wrong, and www.flyontrack.co.uk has a record of the airspace infringements that have occurred. You need to now look at the *why* and the *how* associated with this. Why is this happening, and how do you prevent it in the future?

Practicing your VFR navigation regularly will



Would you be comfortable carrying out a rejected take-off once the tail is up?

go some way to preventing future incursions, and what better than one of the planned LAA ET NavComps to test those skills? (see page 15- Ed). Traditional skills merged with GPS use provide an effective way to navigate, while preventing airspace infringements. However, you do need to practice navigating without the aid of a GPS – it is a good way to keep traditional PPL skills up to date. There is nothing to stop you carrying a safety pilot with you to ensure you don't inadvertently wander into any airspace.

THE RADIO

Perhaps you are uncomfortable using the radio? Here are a few tips to get you using the radio more. Set yourself a route that will challenge your abilities enough to make it interesting, but not prove impossible for you to cope! Consider beforehand an alternative routing to use to cater for the possibility of not getting the clearance you had hoped for – this will reduce the stress involved in obtaining the clearance. You could even let another pilot do the flying while you concentrate on the radio transmissions. If the weather is not good enough to fly, you could sit down with an instructor and simulate flying a route, with the instructor acting as the air traffic controller. Preparation will help, although ultimately there is no substitute for practice.

IMC TRAINING

Thinking of an IMC rating or worried that you might inadvertently enter cloud? Just because your aircraft is not certified to fly in cloud does not prohibit you from practicing IMC flying and keeping these skills up to date. Ensure you have an instructor or safety pilot with you to act as your eyes and ears. Skills such as instrument flying do deteriorate if not practiced regularly. As an aside, you can do your IMC rating on an LAA aircraft providing it

is suitably equipped – it's just you are not currently permitted to actually fly it in cloud.

STRIP FLYING

Farm strips present their own unique challenge. Indeed, if you have never flown in to a farm strip, there is a whole new area of flying to explore – under the guidance of a suitably experienced instructor. The Pilot Coaching Scheme offers a Strip Flying Diploma to hone your skills; you don't necessarily have to do a full course if you don't want to – why not use your 'one hour with an instructor' to try it out?

BOOKS AND COURSES

Winter is always a good time to blow the dust off your old PPL books and re-read them, or put in a request for a new book at Christmas or for your birthday. Alternatively, you could set yourself a resolution to add a rating or complete a course this summer; there are plenty out there to choose from: LAA Diploma, tail-wheel conversion, high performance, multi-engine, gliding, IMC, night, seaplane and more.

What about following in Colin Hales' footsteps and trying to set a new world record? Contact the Royal Aero Club for details of how to go about it (www.airraceuk.co.uk) if that sparks your imagination.

Clearly, if you intend to try something new, or revise something you haven't flown in a while, I strongly recommend you employ the services of a flight instructor. This is

Right: We have produced an A6 leaflet to insert into your license to help you keep track of when you last practiced those essential flying skills. The leaflet is available from your LAA Coach, on the LAA stand at AeroExpo, or upon request from LAA Head Office – or you can download it from the LAA website.

CAA Ref No. _____
LAA Member No. _____

Tick items revised	Date				
Circuits					
Flapless Approach					
Glide Approach					
Short Field Landing					
Soft Field Landing					
Low Level Go-Around					
Other.....					
General Handling					
Steep Turns					
Stalling					
Unusual Attitude Recovery					
Other.....					
Emergencies					
EFATO					
Forced Landing					
Precautionary Ldg					
Other.....					
Other.....					

© Light Aircraft Association 2009 Version 1.1

exactly why the LAA set up the Pilot Coaching Scheme. Our coaches are all CAA qualified instructors and are there to offer instruction, guidance and critique in a safe learning environment. Here's a taster of what's available: aerobatics, gold/silver/bronze general flying diploma, special type diploma, differences training and class rating revalidation, as well as general revision or type or tailwheel conversion.

Some of the joy of becoming a pilot is the learning and challenges associated with it, and you can continue learning and expanding your horizons by trying something new. It doesn't have to be expensive – visit your local LAA Strut or local farm strip, attend a refresher or safety seminar, help out at a fly-in, volunteer as an air-ground operator, or visit your local Air Traffic Control.

I challenge you this year to remove yourself from your comfort zone and look for ways to improve your flying – you may just be grateful of the challenge!



Could you safely make a late go-around when this low on approach to land?