

Radio

N176MA

Over the course of your flying career you probably won't sit in the cockpit with many other pilots – not unless you are a commercial pilot or instructor. Few people will directly judge your flying ability. But every other pilot and air traffic controller on the radio will judge you by your radio skills. Good communications skills will help you get you what you need. When you make a request, you are much more likely to have it granted if you sound professional -- like you know what you are asking for and you can execute the maneuver.

The AIM describes U.S. standard radio procedure. International procedure is covered by ICAO Doc 9432, Manual of Radiotelephony. Here are the lines you need to be able to deliver flawlessly. Perfect radio procedure is a requisite to solo at Best in Flight. Missed radio calls are almost as bad as bumpy landings. You can practice this at home, in the shower, or in the car. It doesn't require an airplane or any money.

Good radio procedure is essential to your piloting skills. Flawless -- or almost flawless -- radio is a prerequisite for solo. If your landings are perfect, but you consistently miss radio calls, you won't get a solo sign-off.

Every initial call up	To whom you are talking
(The first time you initiate contact with a new controller	Who you are
	Where you are
	What you want to do

Morristown Ground	MMU Frequency 121.7
Diamond One Seven Six Mike Alpha	
Hangar Nine	
Taxi <i>Foxtrot</i>	{or whatever the word of the hour is}

*Diamondstar One Seven Six Mike Alpha, Morristown Ground, Taxi Five via Mike and Delta
Taxi Five via Mike and Delta, One Seven Six Mike Alpha*

Morristown Tower	MMU Frequency 118.1
Diamond One Seven Six Mike Alpha	
Ready <i>Two Three</i>	{or whatever the runway is}
Northwest	

*Diamondstar One Seven Six Mike Alpha, Morristown Tower, Cleared for takeoff, Right turnout approved
Cleared for Takeoff, Right turnout, One Seven Six Mike Alpha*

Morristown Tower	MMU Frequency 118.1
Diamond One Seven Six Mike Alpha	
Midfield Right Downwind <i>Two Three</i>	{or whatever the runway is}
Option	

At Morristown, keep in mind that full stop landings only are allowed on RWY 31. Don't ask for the option unless you want a lecture from the controller.

Morristown Tower	MMU Frequency 118.1
Diamond One Seven Six Mike Alpha	
Dover	
Inbound <i>Golf</i>	<i>{or whatever the word of the hour is}</i>

Five calls are required on arrival at non-towered airports:

- Five miles out
- Entering the pattern
- Base leg
- Final
- Clear

Please be conscious of the format of the radio calls at non-towered fields. We always start the communication with [Airport Name] Traffic, and end the call with [Runway Number] [Airport Name]. The transmission starts with “traffic,” but it doesn’t end with “traffic.”

Blairstown Traffic	1N7 Frequency 123.0
Diamond	
Five East	
Inbound Two Five Blairstown	

Blairstown Traffic	1N7 Frequency 123.0
Diamond	
Entering Forty Five Left Downwind	
Two Five Blairstown	

Blairstown Traffic	1N7 Frequency 123.0
Diamond	
Entering Forty Five Left Downwind	
Two Five Blairstown	

Your instructor knows that there is an Advisory Circular that recommends that you make a call that says you are clear of the active runway. What you must say is [Airport Name] Traffic, [Aircraft Type], Clear [Runway number] [Airport Name]. There is no word “Active” in there at all. The reason we say the runway number is so that other aircraft in the area – maybe six miles out – will know the runway in use. To say “active” doesn’t convey any information. If you talk, make sure you say something useful, like the number of the runway people are using.

All transmissions at a non-towered field are made “in the blind” meaning that you transmit with no expectation of a reply. That means that the commonly heard transmission, “Podunk Airport, Cherokee Five east, any traffic in the area please advise,” is useless at best and dangerous at worst.

If you think that no answer means no traffic you may be wrong, dead wrong. You are assuming that the other aircraft have radios, are listening, and will respond. Lots of Cubs and gliders don’t. The call doesn’t help you and it clogs already jammed Unicom frequencies.