

Safe Flying Tip number six:

Wind

Flying when the wind is strong is dangerous.

Like fog and thunderstorms, wind can also be predicted accurately.

The isobars on the weather charts show the wind. When the isobars are very close together it will be windy.

When strong storms pass through an area, the next day may be bright and clear, but too windy for safe flight.

You must discuss the amount of wind you can fly in safely with your CFI. Write it down on your personal limitations checklist.

If you have been flying a lot recently, you probably can handle a little more wind.

For the newly certificated pilot I would suggest flying in no more than 20 knot steady winds.

If it is gusty, I would suggest the newly certificated pilot not fly when the peak wind gusts exceed 5 knots. For example: If the forecast winds are 10 knots gusting to 16 knots, I suggest you wait for another day or wait until late in the day when wind will often diminish.

Airports with only one runway should generally be avoided. If you have the perfect weather with a gentle 10 knot breeze right down the runway, then you can certainly enjoy flying into an airport with a single runway. The single strip runways are often only 60 feet wide vs 200 feet wide at larger multiple runway airports.

You must also know your limits regarding crosswinds. I would suggest the newly certificated pilot's limit to be no more than a 10 knot cross wind when attempting to land on a 200 foot wide runway and only 5 knots if the runway is short and narrow; for example only 3000' long and only 75' wide.

Here is a simple formula for crosswinds that you may find useful.

When the crosswind is 30 degrees off the runway centerline, the crosswind component is exactly one half the wind velocity.

For example: The wind is reported 270 degrees at 18 knots. You are planning to land on runway 24. The wind is 30 degrees off the nose. You have a crosswind component of one half or 9 knots.

If you and your instructor agree that you can safely handle a 10 knot crosswind, then you should be safe to attempt the landing.

Remember you always need a solid go out.

If you are having trouble controlling the airplane because of the wind, you must go around and find an airport with a runway in line with the wind.

For example; If you were trying to land at Brookhaven Airport (HWV) on runway 24 and you were struggling with an 18 knot wind out of 270 degrees, you could divert to Islip (ISP) where there is a runway 28.

A good pilot knows the runway headings at other airports close to her/his destination. If you have numerous options, you can attempt flights in slightly higher winds. If there are few runway options in the area of your destinations, then you must be more conservative in your go-no go decision making process.

One last tip for flying in crosswinds:

I suggest you limit your flaps to 10 degrees and try to touch down main wheels first at a slightly higher speed than normal. I like 10 degrees of flaps vs no flaps because you have better visibility over the nose.

My father, a long time designated examiner and former World War II instructor recommends adding an extra 5 knots to your approach speed when the winds are gusty.

I agree with him.