

Top Ten for the Non-Towered Airport



1. **Do a thorough pre-brief on the airport**
 - Review charts, NOTAMs, runway lengths and conditions, pattern direction and altitude, and any special procedures before departure or well before top of descent.
2. **Establish a sterile cockpit within 10 miles**
 - Eliminate nonessential tasks and conversations within roughly a 10 NM radius so you can focus on see-and-avoid, pattern flow, and CTAF traffic.
3. **Get the wind and runway picture early**
 - Use AWOS/ASOS, windsock, and CTAF traffic to determine the favored runway rather than guessing; verify that what you hear on frequency matches what you see.
4. **Blend into the existing traffic pattern**
 - Enter on a standard 45° downwind when feasible, at the published pattern altitude and appropriate spacing/speed, instead of forcing a straight-in or nonstandard join.
5. **Communicate clearly, briefly, and correctly on CTAF**
 - Use standard phraseology, correct airport name, and position/distance/intentions; avoid unnecessary chatter, step-ons, and last-second “oh by the way” calls.
6. **Prioritize visual traffic clearing over the radios**
 - Keep your eyes outside, especially on base-to-final and during straight-in versus pattern conflicts; use the radio as an aid, not a shield.
7. **Use lights and equipment to increase conspicuity, then verify visually**
 - Turn on landing/taxi lights, strobes, and use TAS/TCAS if available, but always “visually verify what you think to be true” before maneuvering or committing to final.
8. **Stay ahead of the airplane with configuration and checklists**
 - Complete descent, before-landing checks, and make configuration changes early so you’re not heads-down in the pattern or while resolving last-minute sequencing issues.
9. **Respect speed control and spacing for mixed traffic**
 - Adjust pattern speed within aircraft limits to match slower or faster traffic, extend downwind when needed, and avoid cutting in or compressing the pattern.
10. **Plan and brief a safe go-around and departure path**
 - Anticipate the need to go around if sequencing or spacing deteriorates. Know how you’ll reenter the pattern, and upon departure, climb to pattern altitude and exit on the published or standard routes before turning on course.