VFR Pilot/Controller Glossary

**ABEAM** - An aircraft is "abeam" a point or object when that point or object is approximately 90 degrees to the right or left of the aircraft track. Abeam indicates a general position rather than a precise point.

**ABORT** - To terminate a preplanned aircraft maneuver; e.g., an aborted takeoff.

**ACKNOWLEDGE** - Let me know that you have received my message.

**ADVISE INTENTIONS** - Tell me what you plan to do.

**AFFIRMATIVE** - Yes.

**AIRMET** - In-flight weather advisories issued only to amend the area forecast concerning weather phenomena which are of operational interest to all aircraft and potentially hazardous to aircraft having limited capability because of lack of equipment, instrumentation, or pilot qualifications. AIRMETs concern weather of less severity than that covered by SIGMETs or Convective SIGMETs. AIRMETs cover moderate icing, moderate turbulence, sustained winds of 30 knots or more at the surface, widespread areas of ceilings less than 1,000 feet and/or visibility less than 3 miles, and extensive mountain obscuration.

**ALTITUDE READOUT** - An aircraft's altitude, transmitted via the Mode C transponder feature, that is visually displayed in 100-foot increments on a radar scope having readout capability.

**APPROACH SPEED** - The recommended speed contained in aircraft manuals used by pilots when making an approach to landing. This speed will vary for different segments of an approach as well as for aircraft weight and configuration.

**BACK-TAXI** - A term used by air traffic controllers to taxi an aircraft on the runway opposite to the traffic flow. The aircraft may be instructed to back-taxi to the beginning of the runway or at some point before reaching the runway end for the purpose of departure or to exit the runway.
**BLOCKED**- Phraseology used to indicate that a radio transmission has been distorted or interrupted due to multiple simultaneous radio transmissions.

**BRAKING ACTION (GOOD, FAIR, POOR, OR NIL)**- A report of conditions on the airport movement area providing a pilot with a degree/quality of braking that he/she might expect. Braking action is reported in terms of good, fair, poor, or nil.

**CHASE**- An aircraft flown in proximity to another aircraft normally to observe its performance during training or testing.

**CLEARANCE**- An authorization by air traffic control for the purpose of preventing collision between known aircraft, for an aircraft to proceed under specified traffic conditions within controlled airspace. The pilot-in-command of an aircraft may not deviate from the provisions of a visual flight rules (VFR) or instrument flight rules (IFR) air traffic clearance except in an emergency or unless an amended clearance has been obtained. Additionally, the pilot may request a different clearance from that which has been issued by air traffic control (ATC) if information available to the pilot makes another course of action more practicable or if aircraft equipment limitations or company procedures forbid compliance with the clearance issued. Pilots may also request clarification or amendment, as appropriate, any time a clearance is not fully understood, or considered unacceptable because of safety of flight. Controllers should, in such instances and to the extent of operational practicality and safety, honor the pilot's request. 14 CFR Part 91.3(a) states: "The pilot in command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft." THE PILOT IS RESPONSIBLE TO REQUEST AN AMENDED CLEARANCE if ATC issues a clearance that would cause a pilot to deviate from a rule or regulation, or in the pilot's opinion, would place the aircraft in jeopardy.

**CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF**- ATC authorization for an aircraft to depart. It is predicated on known traffic and known physical airport conditions.

**CLEARED FOR THE OPTION**- ATC authorization for an aircraft to make a touch-and-go, low approach, missed approach, stop and go, or full stop landing at the discretion of the pilot. It is normally used in training so that an instructor can evaluate a student's performance under changing situations.

**CLEARED TO LAND**- ATC authorization for an aircraft to land. It is predicated on known traffic and known physical airport conditions.
**CLIMB TO VFR**- ATC authorization for an aircraft to climb to VFR conditions within Class B, C, D, and E surface areas when the only weather limitation is restricted visibility. The aircraft must remain clear of clouds while climbing to VFR.

**CLOSED TRAFFIC**- Successive operations involving takeoffs and landings or low approaches where the aircraft does not exit the traffic pattern.

**CONVECTIVE SIGMET**- A weather advisory concerning convective weather significant to the safety of all aircraft. Convective SIGMETs are issued for tornadoes, lines of thunderstorms, embedded thunderstorms of any intensity level, areas of thunderstorms greater than or equal to VIP level 4 with an area coverage of $\frac{4}{10}$ (40%) or more, and hail $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or greater.

**DIRECT**- Straight line flight between two navigational aids, fixes, points, or any combination thereof. When used by pilots in describing off-airway routes, points defining direct route segments become compulsory reporting points unless the aircraft is under radar contact.

**DISTRESS**- A condition of being threatened by serious and/or imminent danger and of requiring immediate assistance.

**EMERGENCY**- A distress or an urgency condition.

**EXPEDITE**- Used by ATC when prompt compliance is required to avoid the development of an imminent situation. Expedite climb/descent normally indicates to a pilot that the approximate best rate of climb/descent should be used without requiring an exceptional change in aircraft handling characteristics.

**FLIGHT LEVEL**- A level of constant atmospheric pressure related to a reference datum of 29.92 inches of mercury. Each is stated in three digits that represent hundreds of feet. For example, flight level (FL) 250 represents a barometric altimeter indication of 25,000 feet; FL 255, an indication of 25,500 feet.

**GO AHEAD**- Proceed with your message. Not to be used for any other purpose.
**GO AROUND**- Instructions for a pilot to abandon his/her approach to landing. Additional instructions may follow. Unless otherwise advised by ATC, a VFR aircraft or an aircraft conducting visual approach should overfly the runway while climbing to traffic pattern altitude and enter the traffic pattern via the crosswind leg. A pilot on an IFR flight plan making an instrument approach should execute the published missed approach procedure or proceed as instructed by ATC; e.g., "Go around" (additional instructions if required).

**HAVE NUMBERS**- Used by pilots to inform ATC that they have received runway, wind, and altimeter information only.

**HOLD SHORT (RUNWAY)**- Stop before the named runway and do not proceed on to it until receiving further instructions. Hold short instructions must be read back.

**HOMING**- Flight toward a NAVAID, without correcting for wind, by adjusting the aircraft heading to maintain a relative bearing of zero degrees.

**HOW DO YOU HEAR ME?**- A question relating to the quality of the transmission or to determine how well the transmission is being received.

**I SAY AGAIN**- The message will be repeated.

**IDENT**- A request for a pilot to activate the aircraft transponder identification feature. This will help the controller to confirm an aircraft identity or to identify an aircraft.

**IMMEDIATELY**- Used by ATC or pilots when such action compliance is required to avoid an imminent situation.

**LAND AND HOLD SHORT OPERATIONS (LAHSO)**- Operations which include simultaneous takeoffs and landings and/or simultaneous landings when a landing aircraft is able and is instructed by the controller to hold-short of the intersecting runway/taxiway or designated hold-short point. Pilots are expected to promptly inform the controller if the hold short clearance cannot be accepted.
**LINE UP AND WAIT-** Used by ATC to inform a pilot to taxi onto the departure runway and wait. It is not authorization for takeoff. It is used when takeoff clearance cannot immediately be issued because of traffic or other reasons. Previously known as “Position and hold”.

**MAINTAIN-**

a. Concerning altitude/flight level, the term means to remain at the altitude/flight level specified. The phrase "climb and" or "descend and" normally precedes "maintain" and the altitude assignment; e.g., "descend and maintain 5,000."

b. Concerning other ATC instructions, the term is used in its literal sense; e.g., maintain VFR.

**NEGATIVE-** "No," or "permission not granted," or "that is not correct."

**NEGATIVE CONTACT-** Used by pilots to inform ATC that:

a. Previously issued traffic is not in sight. It may be followed by the pilot’s request for the controller to provide assistance in avoiding the traffic.

b. They were unable to contact ATC on a particular frequency.

**NORDO-** (No Radio)- Aircraft that cannot or do not communicate by radio when radio communication is required are referred to as “NORDO.”

**NUMEROUS TARGETS VICINITY (LOCATION)-** A traffic advisory issued by ATC to advise pilots that targets on the radar scope are too numerous to issue individually.

**ON COURSE-**

a. Used to indicate that an aircraft is established on the route centerline.

b. Used by ATC to advise a pilot making a radar approach that his/her aircraft is lined up on the final approach course.

**OVER-** My transmission is ended; I expect a response.
**PILOT'S DISCRETION-** When used in conjunction with altitude assignments, means that ATC has offered the pilot the option of starting climb or descent whenever he/she wishes and conducting the climb or descent at any rate he/she wishes. He/she may temporarily level off at any intermediate altitude. However, once he/she has vacated an altitude, he/she may not return to that altitude.

**RADAR CONTACT-** Used by ATC to inform an aircraft that it is identified on the radar display and radar flight following will be provided until radar identification is terminated. Radar service may also be provided within the limits of necessity and capability. When a pilot is informed of "radar contact," he/she automatically discontinues reporting over compulsory reporting points.

**RADAR CONTACT LOST-** Used by ATC to inform a pilot that radar data used to determine the aircraft's position is no longer being received, or is no longer reliable and radar service is no longer being provided. The loss may be attributed to several factors including the aircraft merging with weather or ground clutter, the aircraft operating below radar line of sight coverage, the aircraft entering an area of poor radar return, failure of the aircraft transponder, or failure of the ground radar equipment.

**RADAR SERVICE TERMINATED-** Used by ATC to inform a pilot that he/she will no longer be provided any of the services that could be received while in radar contact. Radar service is automatically terminated, and the pilot is not advised in the following cases:

a. An aircraft cancels its IFR flight plan, except within Class B airspace, Class C airspace, a TRSA, or where Basic Radar service is provided.

b. An aircraft conducting an instrument, visual, or contact approach has landed or has been instructed to change to advisory frequency.

c. An arriving VFR aircraft, receiving radar service to a tower-controlled airport within Class B airspace, Class C airspace, a TRSA, or where sequencing service is provided, has landed; or to all other airports, is instructed to change to tower or advisory frequency.

d. An aircraft completes a radar approach.
**READ BACK**- Repeat my message back to me.

**REPORT**- Used to instruct pilots to advise ATC of specified information; e.g., "Report passing Hamilton VOR."

**RESUME OWN NAVIGATION**- Used by ATC to advise a pilot to resume his/her own navigational responsibility. It is issued after completion of a radar vector or when radar contact is lost while the aircraft is being radar vectored.

**RUNWAY HEADING**- The magnetic direction that corresponds with the runway centerline extended, not the painted runway number. When cleared to "fly or maintain runway heading," pilots are expected to fly or maintain the heading that corresponds with the extended centerline of the departure runway. Drift correction shall not be applied; e.g., Runway 4, actual magnetic heading of the runway centerline 044, fly 044.

**SAY AGAIN**- Used to request a repeat of the last transmission. Usually specifies transmission or portion thereof not understood or received; e.g., "Say again all after ABRAM VOR."

**SAY ALTITUDE**- Used by ATC to ascertain an aircraft's specific altitude/flight level. When the aircraft is climbing or descending, the pilot should state the indicated altitude rounded to the nearest 100 feet.

**SAY HEADING**- Used by ATC to request an aircraft heading. The pilot should state the actual heading of the aircraft.

**SIGMET**- A weather advisory issued concerning weather significant to the safety of all aircraft. SIGMET advisories cover severe and extreme turbulence, severe icing, and widespread dust or sandstorms that reduce visibility to less than 3 miles.

**SPEAK SLOWER**- Used in verbal communications as a request to reduce speech rate.

**SQUAWK (Mode, Code, Function)**- Activate specific modes/codes/functions on the aircraft transponder; e.g., "Squawk three/alpha, two one zero five, low."

**STAND BY**- Means the controller or pilot must pause for a few seconds, usually to attend to other duties of a higher priority. Also means to wait as in "stand by for clearance." The caller should reestablish contact if a delay is lengthy. "Stand by" is not an approval or denial.
**STOP ALTITUDE SQUAWK**- Used by ATC to inform an aircraft to turn-off the automatic altitude reporting feature of its transponder. It is issued when the verbally reported altitude varies 300 feet or more from the automatic altitude report.

**TRAFFIC ALERT (aircraft call sign), TURN (left/right) IMMEDIATELY, (climb/descend) AND MAINTAIN (altitude).**

A safety alert issued by ATC to aircraft under their control if ATC is aware the aircraft is at an altitude which, in the controller's judgment, places the aircraft in unsafe proximity to terrain, obstructions, or other aircraft. The controller may discontinue the issuance of further alerts if the pilot advises he/she is taking action to correct the situation or has the other aircraft in sight.

a. Terrain/Obstruction Alert- A safety alert issued by ATC to aircraft under their control if ATC is aware the aircraft is at an altitude which, in the controller's judgment, places the aircraft in unsafe proximity to terrain/obstructions; e.g., "Low Altitude Alert, check your altitude immediately."

b. Aircraft Conflict Alert- A safety alert issued by ATC to aircraft under their control if ATC is aware of an aircraft that is not under their control at an altitude which, in the controller's judgment, places both aircraft in unsafe proximity to each other. With the alert, ATC will offer the pilot an alternate course of action when feasible; e.g., "Traffic Alert, advise you turn right heading zero niner zero or climb to eight thousand immediately."

Note: The issuance of a safety alert is contingent upon the capability of the controller to have an awareness of an unsafe condition. The course of action provided will be predicated on other traffic under ATC control. Once the alert is issued, it is solely the pilot's prerogative to determine what course of action, if any, he/she will take.

**UNABLE**- Indicates inability to comply with a specific instruction, request, or clearance.

**URGENCY**- A condition of being concerned about safety and of requiring timely but not immediate assistance; a potential distress condition.

**VERIFY**- Request confirmation of information; e.g., "verify assigned altitude."
**VERIFY SPECIFIC DIRECTION OF TAKEOFF (OR TURNS AFTER TAKEOFF)**- Used by ATC to ascertain an aircraft's direction of takeoff and/or direction of turn after takeoff. It is normally used for IFR departures from an airport not having a control tower. When direct communication with the pilot is not possible, the request and information may be relayed through an FSS, dispatcher, or by other means.

**VFR CONDITIONS**- Weather conditions equal to or better than the minimum for flight under visual flight rules. The term may be used as an ATC clearance/instruction only when:

a. An IFR aircraft requests a climb/descent in VFR conditions.

b. The clearance will result in noise abatement benefits where part of the IFR departure route does not conform to an FAA approved noise abatement route or altitude.

c. A pilot has requested a practice instrument approach and is not on an IFR flight plan

**VFR NOT RECOMMENDED**- An advisory provided by a flight service station to a pilot during a preflight or inflight weather briefing that flight under visual flight rules is not recommended. To be given when the current and/or forecast weather conditions are at or below VFR minimums. It does not abrogate the pilot's authority to make his/her own decision.

**WHEN ABLE**- When used in conjunction with ATC instructions, gives the pilot the latitude to delay compliance until a condition or event has been reconciled. Unlike "pilot discretion," when instructions are prefaced "when able," the pilot is expected to seek the first opportunity to comply. Once a maneuver has been initiated, the pilot is expected to continue until the specifications of the instructions have been met. "When able," should not be used when expeditious compliance is required.

**WILCO**- I have received your message, understand it, and will comply with it.