



OPERATIONAL ENGLISH
FOR PROFESSIONAL PILOTS



PRACTICAL GUIDE

U.S. ATC COMMUNICATIONS

Clearance, Ride Reports,
Takeoff and Landing Phraseology

A READBACK PILOT ACADEMY PUBLICATION



02 / CLEARANCE DELIVERY

02

IFR CLEARANCE

Be Ready Before You Call

Receiving an IFR clearance at a busy U.S. airport can be challenging, especially when ATC issues a full route instead of the one you expected. **The key is preparation.** Before calling, review your filed route, expected departure, altitude restrictions, and available clearance methods.

Many pilots use **CRAFT** to organize a clearance. It is a useful framework, but not a reason to reorganize the information while the controller is still talking.

THE CRAFT FRAMEWORK

C CLEARANCE LIMIT	R ROUTE	A ALTITUDE	F FREQUENCY	T TRANSPONDER
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ON FREQUENCY

OPTION 01	"Tampa Clearance, Academy One Twenty-One, request IFR clearance to Miami, information Charlie."
OPTION 02	"Tampa Ground, Academy One Twenty-One, looking for clearance to Miami, with Charlie."
OPTION 03	"Tampa Clearance, Academy One Twenty-One, request IFR to Miami, information Charlie."

Pick the version that feels natural. Stick with it and get proficient. Adapt the facility name and ATIS code to the airport.

READBACK INSIGHT

If you miss part of a clearance, **copy what you can** and request the missing information; never guess. **"Expect FL350 ten minutes after departure"** is not authorization to climb to FL350 in normal operations. Follow the altitude instructions and restrictions in effect.

03 / TOWER / DEPARTURE

03

TAKEOFF CLEARANCE

Brief the Plan. Listen for the Change.

Before calling Tower, know what kind of departure you are flying: your **IFR clearance, applicable SID, expected initial routing, and altitude restrictions**. Brief the likely possibilities without assuming you know exactly what Tower will say.

Use “**ready for departure**” to tell Tower you are ready. “**Line up and wait**” permits entry onto the runway, not takeoff. Listen carefully when the clearance arrives: it may differ from what you expected.

ON FREQUENCY

RNAV WAYPOINT ADVISORY

“RNAV to JAMBA, runway Eight Right, cleared for takeoff.”

May be used in certain simultaneous parallel RNAV departures.

RUNWAY HEADING

“Fly runway heading, runway Eight Right, cleared for takeoff.”

Follow the assigned runway heading after takeoff.

ASSIGNED HEADING

“Turn left heading zero six zero, runway Eight Right, cleared for takeoff.”

Follow the assigned heading as cleared.

READBACK INSIGHT

An “**RNAV to...**” advisory is not part of every RNAV departure. The takeoff clearance, existing IFR clearance, and published SID must be considered together; an assigned heading may also change the expected flight path.

Understand the planned departure and its likely alternatives. Stay ready to hear something different, verify what ATC actually says, and clarify anything unexpected.

04 / ENROUTE COMMUNICATIONS

04

RIDE REPORTS

More Than Just Turbulence

During cruise, pilots frequently share information about flight conditions with ATC. These short exchanges can help crews decide whether to request a different altitude.

You may hear *smooth*, *light chop*, *occasional moderate turbulence*, or *mostly smooth above FL340*. To understand a ride report, focus on three elements:

01

CONDITION

How rough?

Smooth
Light chop
Light turbulence
Moderate turbulence
Severe turbulence

02

FREQUENCY

How often?

Occasional (less than 1/3)
Intermittent (1/3 to 2/3)
Continuous (more than 2/3)

03

LOCATION

Where?

At FL360
For the last 20 miles
Ahead along the route

ON FREQUENCY

PILOT

"Denver Center, American Three Fifty-Eight, flight level three four zero, good ride."

PILOT

"Center, any ride reports ahead?"

PILOT

"We've had occasional light chop for the last twenty miles at flight level three six zero."

PILOT

"Any better rides higher?"

READBACK INSIGHT

Light chop describes small, rapid bumps without appreciable changes in altitude or attitude. Add recent context whenever possible. An informal ride exchange is **not necessarily a complete turbulence PIREP**, which may require additional details.

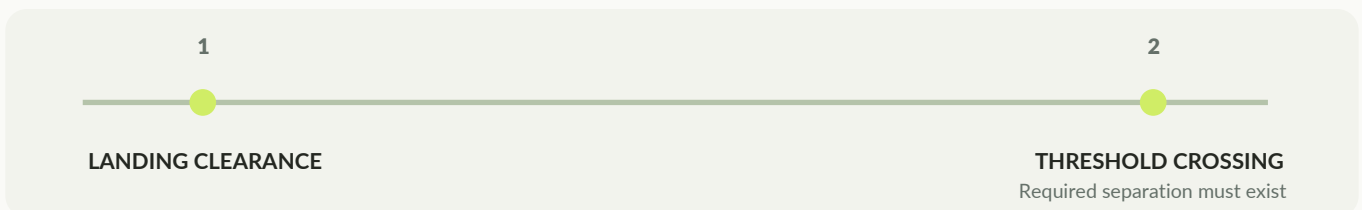
LANDING CLEARANCE

Cleared to Land, But Traffic Is Still Ahead

One detail surprises many pilots new to U.S. operations: Tower may issue a landing clearance while another aircraft is still approaching or using the runway.

Under FAA procedures, a controller may **anticipate** that the required runway separation will exist when the following aircraft crosses the landing threshold, subject to applicable restrictions. A landing clearance therefore does **not** necessarily mean the runway is already empty.

THE DISTINCTION



ON FREQUENCY

ATC	"Academy One Twenty-One, runway Two Two Left, cleared to land. Traffic will depart prior to your arrival."
PILOT	"Cleared to land runway Two Two Left, Academy One Twenty-One."

READBACK INSIGHT

ATC must ensure the required runway separation. Pilots must continue monitoring traffic, complying with restrictions, and responding to further instructions, including a go-around. **An early landing clearance does not mean the situation cannot change.**

GO BEYOND THE PHRASEOLOGY.

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