

Common Errors

This article's five tips may or may not address what ails your landings. If not, analyzing the problems and comparing them against this list of common errors might help.

MISALIGNED TURN TO FINAL

If your turn to final is too early or too late and you're not where you want to be, some common problems might include:

- Incorrect bank angle: a 30-degree bank in the pattern is nominal.
- Bad timing: starting the turn too early or too late (this is where remembering the ideal sight picture is critical).
- Misjudging the wind: it's either stronger or weaker, or aligned differently.



FLARING TOO HIGH

If you need to check the landing gear's security after each touchdown, you're probably flaring too high. The time-honored way to address this is to shoot a normal approach, but then add power before touching down and try to fly down the runway at your target speed but as close to it as you can, then climb out for another pattern. This helps teach the proper flare altitude.

FLOATING/BALLOONING

The root cause of either problem is the same: excessive airspeed. Ballooning, however, also results from an excessively abrupt flare or pitching too high. The cure is better control of your airspeed and slowing down the rate at which you pitch up the nose into the flare. Practicing the flare and bleeding off airspeed to the stall at altitude and in the practice area away from the airport can help.

PORPOISING

Pilot-induced oscillation is another word for this phenomenon, which usually results from overcontrolling. We'd strongly caution against ever lowering the nose abruptly close to the runway—once it's been raised, leave it there and use power to arrest the resulting descent. In extreme situations, add all the power you've got and go around for another look.

WIND LIFTING A WING

Even with rather light crosswinds, air can get under the upwind wing and lift it too much for comfort or proper directional control. Extreme situations, of course, can drag the opposite wingtip and result in a groundloop. But the need to use aileron into the wind to keep the upwind wing level never should come as a surprise, since you needed crosswind correction down the final. In stiff winds, keep an appropriate aileron deflection cranked in all the way to the ramp.