

Fixing Problems

If you can't quite grasp the skill of performing a smooth flare, it's likely you're experience at least one of the following problems. Try the recommended fixes.

HARD LANDING

A hard landing usually results from the wings losing lift with the wheels too far above the runway. Presuming you're on-speed, you could be flaring too soon or too quickly, or reducing power too soon. For the former, try flying some low approaches in the landing configuration and, instead of touching down, keep the airplane just above the runway to the end, then add full power and climb away before retracting flaps or gear. This will help you find the proper sight picture, combining height above the runway and a nose-up attitude.

FLOATING

Floating usually is caused by carrying too much airspeed or too much power into the flare. First, make sure power is reduced to idle by halfway through the flare, perhaps sooner with a slick airplane like a Mooney. Another cause may be failure to get the nose high enough soon enough. This latter problem may be evidenced by a flat or nose-first touchdown.

BALLOONING

Ballooning is perhaps the most common error in the flare and usually results from pitching up the nose too quickly. If this is a problem, try pitching up in increments—add some back pressure and wait for the airplane to react, then add some more and wait again. Repeat as necessary until the nose is where it should be for a mains-first touchdown. Another cause is carrying too much airspeed into the flare, or landing a light airplane at the end of a long trip when you're used to having more weight aboard. The cure is the same for both: Don't pitch up so quickly.

FLAT OR NOSEWHEEL-FIRST TOUCHDOWN

If you're touching down on all three wheels (presuming a tricycle-gear airplane) or nosewheel-first, you're not pitching the nose high enough in the flare. Another cause may be attempting to recover from ballooning by lowering the nose. A better way to handle ballooning is to stop increasing back pressure when the ballooning begins, let the airspeed dissipate until the airplane starts to sink toward the runway, then add additional nose-up pressure. Abruptly lowering the nose in the flare almost guarantees a nosewheel-first touchdown and risks damage.