

The Safety Pilot's Checklist

Riding as safety pilot for someone flying under the hood means two things: First, you're a required crewmember, and have a shared responsibility for the flight's safe outcome. Second, you need to be able to fulfill your duties and responsibilities. As such, you need your own checklist, presented herewith.



AIRCRAFT FAMILIARITY

This should be a no-brainer, since you're required to be appropriately rated in the aircraft category and class, but there's a world of difference between a mid-60s Skylane and a brand-new one with a glass panel. Are you familiar with the type, as well as the specific airframe? Do you know its emergency procedures and limitations in case the left-seater has an issue? Ever landed one?

GOT VISIBILITY?

Remember your primary role as safety pilot: looking for other traffic while the left-seater flies under the hood. Is your seating position adequate to see what's on the opposite side of the aircraft? Can you maneuver your head sufficiently to see past the hood? Can you reach all the controls you might need?

KNOW THE PLAN, AND PLAN B

During the preflight briefing, you and the left-seater discussed the mission and what you'll do if something doesn't pan out. You remember all that, right, so when the tower at your Plan A airport suggests you depart the Class D, you know where you're going next? The good safety pilot does, and can help with communications, finding the appropriate plate and helping configure the cockpit.

MAKE NOTES

If the two of you are doing this right, there will be a debrief when you're back on the ground. Make some notes on a kneeboard or in your head of things you want to go over with the left-seater when back on the ground. Helping him or her achieve their training objective means you'll get asked back, and you'll have your own safety pilot when you need it.