NO SIDS, NO STARs

When I earned my instrument rating (in the late 1980s), light plane pilots weren’t usually expected to fly standard instrument departures or standard terminal arrival procedures. In fact, I was encouraged to include “No SIDs, No STARs” in the remarks section when filing a flight plan.

This was reinforced a few years later when I earned my instrument instructor rating at a large aviation school. I think this attitude was due, in part, to the fact that at the time, the U.S. government’s SIDs and STARs sold separately from terminal approach procedures (“approach plates,” a small stack of which are at right, for nostalgia’s sake).

As a cost-saving measure, most pilots who weren’t flying for a living didn’t buy the SIDs/STARs book, and through the flight plan remarks told controllers not to assign us one of those “airline pilot” procedures.

In today’s Internet-based, GPS-database-driven world, there’s no excuse for not knowing either a SID or an ODP is published for the departure airport. The advent of tablet EFBs means having the SIDs and STARs available—along with any other relevant chart—in any IFR airplane at any time.

It still takes some advance planning and briefing—like a missed approach, you cannot accept direct-to-waypoint guidance on a GPS-depicted SID until you have reached a specified altitude from which it’s safe to make turns from runway heading. But assuming you take care of the climb requirement, the magenta line helps keep you on a safe ground track to avoid obstacles until you’ve climbed into the en route structure.

Procedures and then Takeoff Minimums, for the moment. I’ll