



Ramp Safety

Most general aviation airports can be sleepy places where only the flight school's canine mascot is moving on an average day. At the other extreme is the big-city FBO, where piston-powered flivvers get parked in the South 40 and you'll catch a shuttle to get to the front desk. Somewhere in between is the norm: a moderately busy ramp, with airplanes of all sizes coming and going. It can be a tricky place.

SLOW DOWN

When ever approaching or operating on a ramp area, the first thing you should do is slow down. You only need to use enough power to keep the airplane rolling. Moving slowly also will help you stop quickly when a baggage cart gets loose or that King Air starts taxiing in your direction unexpectedly.

AVOID FOD

Beyond that, pay extra-close attention and you'll find the forgotten wheel chock and uncoiled tiedown chains. Both can wreak havoc on propellers and wheel pants. On tight ramps (Key West, Fla., comes to mind), wingtip clearance can be an issue—a conscientious FBO will have brightly painted centerlines on which to taxi and, perhaps, wingwalkers.

WATCH FOR THE OTHER GUY

Pay extra close attention to what other airplanes might be doing, especially jets. Ideally we'd all turn on the rotating beacon with the master switch, signifying someone is in the cockpit and the engine(s) could start at any moment. It's a bad idea, thus, to taxi behind any jet or other aircraft with an operating beacon unless you *know* for certain it's not generating thrust.

PARKING

At larger FBOs, there's usually someone to direct you to the appropriate parking spot. Often, that will be right up front, and your airplane will be towed and tied down after you unload it. At smaller FBOs, you're on your own. Some ramps will have rows of parked aircraft, others rows of empty tiedowns. When parking yourself, select a spot with all the tiedown ropes or chains present, and which you can taxi to and from without sharp turns.