

Lost Procedures

One of the tasks that you may be asked about on the private pilot exam is how to react when and if you get lost.

The approved FAA answer is the five Cs for: Confess, Conserve, Climb, Communicate, and Comply.

Let's discuss these a bit. They may come in handy for your solo cross country flights.

Confessing is admitting to yourself that you have become lost. Many pilots have failed to do this, wandered around using precious fuel, and only worsened the situation when they could have taken positive proactive steps to recover. Once you have admitted to yourself (and your passengers) you are lost it becomes easier to lose the façade and focus on finding out where you are.

Conserving fuel becomes the first proactive task in a lost procedure. A good rule-of-thumb is to throttle back to a power setting that will give you the best glide speed and allow you to maintain altitude. If you are above 3000 pressure altitude, lean the engine for peak power.

Climbing a few more thousands of feet while in a gentle turn (15-20 degrees of bank) may allow you to gain a better perspective of features on the ground. It will also give you better communication and navigation range. If you see a city, airport, highway, river, lake, etc. Try to identify them on your sectional.

Communicate with an ARTCC or approach control. **If you are a student pilot advise them of that fact.** They will assign you a discrete transponder code and be able to quickly locate you. If you can't raise a ARTCC or approach control, try calling FSS on 122.2 MHz or other nearby RCOs that are close to your last known location. If able, use your own GPS or VOR to establish your position – see my note for *Positional Awareness* for how to triangulate your position using two VORs. **As a final resort to contacting a FSS make a call on 121.5 MHz.** (Note: this should be a primary course of action if your fuel supply is questionable)

Comply with directions provided by ARTCC, Approach Control or a FSS. They can get you back on a course to a nearby airport where you can land and refuel. **If you are a student pilot, once you are safely on the ground you must contact your flight instructor for further directions.**

In conclusion, an aid that will likely prevent you from becoming lost in the first place is to use flight following. On your first dual cross country flight your flight instructor should have shown you how to obtain this service from ARTCC.