



Fit to fly

Safety tips for returning to GA flying post COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many aviators to take a pause until non-essential travel restrictions have been lifted.

As we move into the recovery journey it is important to stop and think carefully about the safety implications of a return to more 'normal' aviation operations. One way to make your return safer is by using one of the simplest but most effective tools in aviation—the checklist.

Conducting checks in advance of your first flight back, can significantly increase the safety of your flight.

The checklists here are high-level ones you can use in addition to your aircraft and personal ([I'M SAFE/PAVE](#)) checklists. The Personal/Planning checklist should be done before you even arrive at the airfield. Doing the aircraft check a day early could save you a delay if anything pops up.

Checklists for pilots

Personal/planning

1. **Physical health:** if unwell, do not fly. Exercise heightened caution if taking prescription or retail medications. Obey directions on medication packaging. Seek DAME advice if in doubt
2. **Mental health:** assess effects of financial or emotional stress caused by lockdown on your decision-making ability, fatigue level and fitness to fly
3. **Data sources:** check EFBs and maps are up-to-date
4. **Licence document:** check to ensure your proficiency checks and flight reviews are valid or you meet CASA's exemption rules
5. **Medical certificate:** check your certificate is appropriate for your flight and, if it has expired, that you are meeting the exemption rules
6. **Currency:** make sure you meet your currency requirements or any CASA exemptions
7. **Competency:** make your first flight back something you would be comfortable with—avoid making it overly complex. If needed, brush up on your skills by engaging with your local flying instructor.
8. **Rehearse your flight:** mental practice or 'chair flying' has been shown to sharpen skills and responses
9. **Weather:** now that winter has arrived, don't make things harder and more hazardous by making your first flight on a day when the weather is challenging. You can wait a little longer. Familiarise yourself with forecasts at the Bureau of Meteorology—Knowledge Centre [bom.gov.au](#)

10. **Alternate:** check you meet all applicable alternate requirements (fuel, weather, Check lighting, nav aids). If your flight is across state borders, check this is legal (information about state and territory border closures is available via [australia.gov.au](#)).

Aircraft

1. **Fuel:** drain more than usual fuel to check thoroughly for water contamination
2. **Documents:** check maintenance release for validity, open items and due maintenance
3. **PPE:** if you choose to wear a mask in the cockpit, check it does not interfere with your headset
4. **Hygiene:** if concerned about contamination of the aircraft by previous users, clean interior surfaces. Seek guidance on how to do this without damaging them.
5. **Pre-flight:** long periods of inactivity may include:
 - low tyre pressures
 - low battery voltage
 - fluid leaks and/or low levels
 - corrosion
 - insects/nests, especially in pitot/static ports
 - rodent damage to wiring
 - birds' nests
 - dust on airframe and windows.

Aerodrome/airspace

1. **Wildlife:** more birds and animals may be present on runways and taxiways following periods of inactivity
2. **Condition:** be prepared for long grass and possible deterioration of runway and taxiway surfaces. Inspect runways or contact aerodrome as appropriate
3. **Changes:** check documentation for airspace changes (such as Brisbane and Sunshine Coast new runway flightpaths)
4. **Traffic:** unusual levels of activity in the circuit may occur at some aerodromes. Refresh your procedures for joining, departing and operating in the circuit. Traffic levels may increase as normal traffic returns.

Maintenance/aircraft return to service

1. **Plan ahead:** when the restrictions are lifted and everyone wants to fly again, the pressure will be on for all the maintenance to be certified and aircraft returned to service
2. **Communicate:** with your LAME/AMO regarding airworthiness after your aircraft has been parked for a longer than usual time
3. **Read the good book:** the manufacturer's maintenance manual (MMM) has your aircraft's best answers to 'what, how and when' questions for inspections, storage and type-specific maintenance.

Other maintenance information

See these resources (available at casa.gov.au) for useful information:

- [AWB 28-008](#) – Water contamination in aircraft fuel tanks/system
- [AWB 85-021](#) – Piston engines low utilisation—maintenance practices
- [AWB 85-017](#) – Piston engines—external corrosion
- CASA's [Maintenance guide for pilots](#) has information on special flight permits, checking the maintenance release, daily inspections and certification of maintenance
- [CAR Schedule 8](#) for the list of maintenance tasks that a pilot is allowed to do.

Other useful reading

- CASA, *Flight Planning Kit* available from shop.casa.gov.au
- CASA, *Flight Safety Australia*, April 2020, [Maintaining your skills in isolation](#)
- CASA, *Flight Safety Australia*, March 2020, [Cleaning hot spots](#)
- CASA, *Flight Safety Australia*, March 2020, [Timely bulletin has advice for engine preservation](#)
- New Zealand Civil Aviation Authority, Vector magazine, May 2020, [Getting back into the air](#)
- UK Civil Aviation Authority, CAP 1925, May 2020, COVID 19 – [Preparing to return to normal flying operations for general aviation private pilots](#)
- AOPA Air Safety Institute, US, May 2020, [Return-to-flight proficiency plan](#)

We're here to help

CASA's aviation safety advisors are always more than happy to help with advice, information and resources for organisations and individuals who want to brush up on relevant safety issues. Please feel free to contact them, as well as making use of the wealth of safety education material CASA has available.

Make sure you are aware of any regulatory requirements with which your compliance may have been affected by the cessation of your flying activities—including conditions on any of CASA's COVID-19 relief exemptions that may apply to you, your aircraft or your operation.

To find out more and keep up-to-date with CASA's [COVID-19 aviation support](#), visit casa.gov.au

