SET STANDARD

— SET THE REFERENCE. FLY THE STANDARD. —

SET STANDARD TRAINING

FLIGHT CREW TRAINING DOCUMENT
EASA · SERA · ICAO · FAA AIM

PHRASEOLOGY AND PROCEDURES COMPARED · SIDE BY SIDE

EASA vs FAA Comms

How to talk on the radio on both sides of the Atlantic, from the first call to lost communications
For European pilots flying in the USA and American pilots flying in Europe



INTENDED FOR
VFR · IFR pilots · instructors

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK
SERA · ICAO · FAA AIM · 14 CFR

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English

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01–04 FUNDAMENTALS ›
05–07 VFR ›
08–10 IFR & EMERGENCIES ›
11–12 FLIGHT & TEST ›
A ANNEXES ›
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Record of revisions

EDITION / REV.	DATE	CHANGES
1 / 1.0	November 2026	First edition. Regulatory basis checked against Regulation (EU) No 923/2012 (SERA) as amended by Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/404 (applicable from 1 May 2025), the current FAA AIM, Pilot/Controller Glossary and FAA Order JO 7110.65, and 14 CFR Part 91. Includes ten open exercises, two complete flights compared, commented solutions and two preparation sheets.

3.1 Numbers, frequencies and levels

Both systems use the same phonetic alphabet and the same principle: **digits one by one**, except whole hundreds and thousands. The differences are small words that change the whole sound of a message. In the tables, "published" means the phraseology written in SERA/ICAO or the AIM; "common" means what you will hear but is not the written standard.

ITEM	EUROPE · EASA / ICAO	USA · FAA
Frequency 122.1	"one two two **decimal** one"	"one two two **point** one"
Altitude 4 500 ft	"four thousand five hundred feet"	"four thousand five hundred" (AIM 4-2-9 example, without "feet")
Altitude 12 500 ft	"one two thousand five hundred feet"	"one two thousand five hundred"
Flight level 100	"flight level one hundred"	Not used: below 18 000 ft MSL levels are altitudes ("one zero thousand", AIM 4-2-8)
Flight level 190	"flight level one niner zero"	"flight level one niner zero"
Heading 100	"heading one zero zero"	"heading one zero zero"
Numbers 3, 4, 5, 9	"tree", "fower", "fife", "niner" in the standard	Published in the AIM (4-2-7) as "tree", "fow-er", "fife", "nin-er"; in common use mostly "niner" is heard

REGULATION · AIM 4-2-8 AND 4-2-9

The AIM gives the US procedures: the decimal point in frequencies is spoken "**point**". It notes that ICAO uses "decimal" and that the FAA accepts it from military aircraft and others required to follow ICAO procedures — a European pilot saying "decimal" will be understood. Above 9 900 the digits before "thousand" are spoken separately ("one zero thousand"); at and above 18 000 ft MSL levels become "flight level" followed by the separate digits.

3.2 The altimeter: hectopascals and inches

This is the single most dangerous difference in the book. Europe sets pressure in **hectopascals** and calls it "QNH"; the USA uses **inches of mercury** and calls it "altimeter". Many aeroplanes, including the G1000, can display either unit: check which one is selected before every flight.

COMMON ERROR · "READY FOR TAKE-OFF"

In ICAO and SERA phraseology the word "take-off" is used only in the clearance itself and its cancellation: you are "ready for **departure**". US pilots say "ready for departure" too, though "ready to go" and "ready for takeoff" are often heard (colloquial). Use "departure" on both sides.

6.3 The traffic pattern and its calls

The rectangle is the same; the vocabulary is not. In the USA, unless otherwise indicated, pattern turns are to the left (AIM 4-3-3), propeller aircraft fly the pattern at 1 000 ft AGL as recommended practice, and the AIM figure shows the entry in level flight, abeam the midpoint of the runway, at pattern altitude. At non-towered airports the 45° entry to midfield downwind is the standard teaching. In SERA airspace the circuit direction, height and joining procedure are published for each aerodrome in the AIP. At a towered airport, on either side, the controller's instruction replaces any recommended entry.

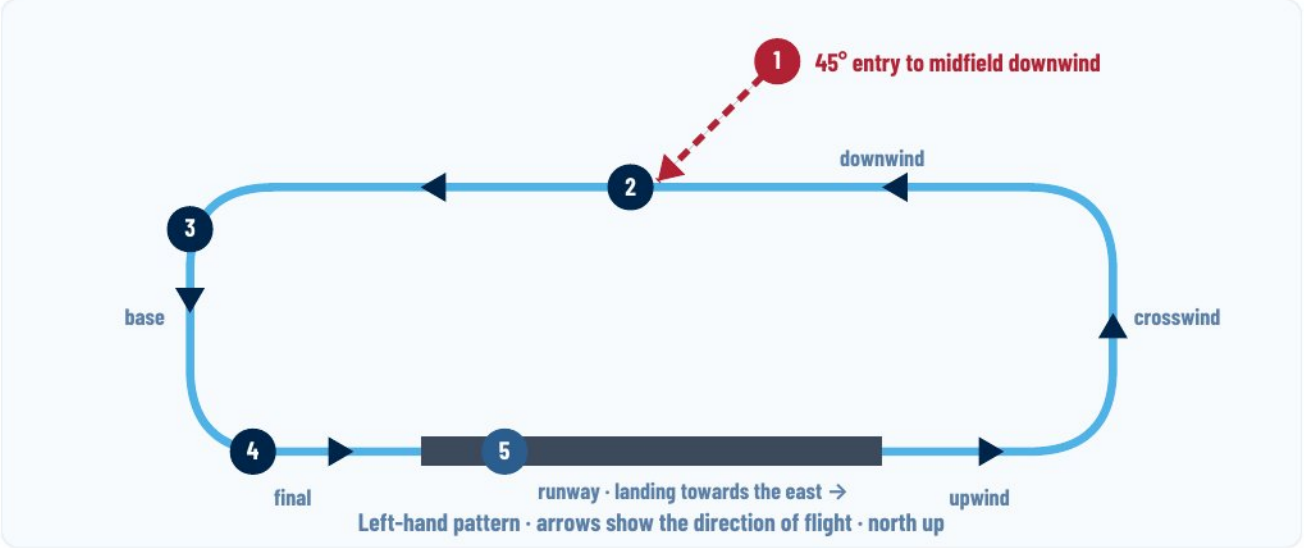


FIG 6.1 *Left-hand pattern for a landing towards the east: 1 entry at 45° to midfield downwind (standard US teaching at non-towered airports), 2 midfield downwind, 3 base, 4 final, 5 touchdown. With a tower, fly what ATC instructs.*

POINT	EUROPE · WHAT YOU HEAR AND SAY	USA · WHAT YOU HEAR AND SAY
1 · Join	As published in the AIP or as instructed: "join left hand downwind runway two two". Some States (notably the UK) use an overhead join.	Tower: as instructed ("enter left downwind runway two seven", "make straight-in runway two seven"). Non-towered: 45° entry to midfield downwind is common practice.
2 · Downwind	"EC-ABC, downwind (for full stop / touch and go)".	"Report midfield left downwind" → "Skyhawk three alpha bravo, midfield left downwind".
3 · Base	"Report base" (if requested); "extend downwind".	"Extend downwind, I'll call your base"; "make short approach"; "turn base now".

((·)) Taxi request

After listening to the ATIS

	EUROPE · EASA / ICAO	USA · FAA
PLT	Arbazo Ground, EC-ABC, DA40 at the general aviation apron, VFR to Sotoverde via November, information Lima, request taxi.	Lake Harmon Ground, Skyhawk one two three alpha bravo, west ramp, VFR to Pine Ridge, northbound, with Bravo, request taxi.
ATC	EC-ABC, taxi to holding point Alfa one, runway two two, via Alfa, QNH one zero one eight.	Skyhawk one two three alpha bravo, Lake Harmon Ground, maintain VFR at or below three thousand five hundred, departure frequency one one niner point eight five, squawk four three two one, runway two seven, taxi via Alpha, cross runway three six.
PLT	Holding point Alfa one, runway two two, via Alfa, QNH one zero one eight, EC-ABC.	At or below three thousand five hundred, one one niner point eight five, squawk four three two one, runway two seven via Alpha, cross runway three six, Skyhawk one two three alpha bravo.

Europe: the taxi clearance, runway and QNH are mandatory readback items under SERA; the zone exit is confirmed by Tower. USA: at many Class C airports Ground (or Clearance Delivery) issues the VFR departure package — altitude, departure frequency, squawk — before taxi; this is common local practice, not a single national rule. The explicit runway crossing must be read back.

((·)) Ready for departure

At the holding point

	EUROPE · EASA / ICAO	USA · FAA
PLT	Arbazo Tower, EC-ABC, holding point Alfa one, ready for departure.	Lake Harmon Tower, Skyhawk one two three alpha bravo, holding short runway two seven, ready for departure, VFR northbound.
ATC	EC-ABC, after departure turn right, not above two thousand feet, report November, runway two two, cleared for take-off, wind two four zero degrees eight knots.	Skyhawk three alpha bravo, runway two seven, fly runway heading, cleared for takeoff.
PLT	Right turn, not above two thousand feet, wilco November, runway two two, cleared for take-off, EC-ABC.	Runway two seven, runway heading, cleared for takeoff, Skyhawk three alpha bravo.

The US controller has abbreviated the callsign; from now on the pilot may do the same. European "holding point" vs US "holding short": both are heard, but they are the habitual words of each system. The level restriction and the runway are read back on both sides.