

Spotter Duties

(Recommended)

Now that the season is upon us, our field will, at times, be very busy and we need to use pilot spotters. Do you know what the responsibilities of a pilot spotter are? The pilot spotter, or just spotter, is a safety person for the pilot. The pilot and spotter should be a team working together for the safety of the pilot, the spotter, the aircraft, and everyone at or near the field. While the pilot has the responsibility of flying the aircraft in a safe manner, the spotter has many other responsibilities, which include:

- Relay messages from the flight line to the pilot about landing aircraft, aircraft emergencies, or dead-stick landings by other aircraft on the field. The pilot may be concentrating on his aircraft and may not hear or pay attention to background messages on the field.
- Relay messages from the pilot to the flight line about the pilot's intentions including landing, landing direction, touch and go's, dead stick etc. The spotter must speak loudly to be heard at all pilot stations.
- Be the eyes of the pilot away from the aircraft. Watch the flight line and inform your pilot of aircraft taxiing in front of the pilot, people on the runway and obstacles on the ground.
- Watch the other aircraft in flight and inform your pilot of any that may cross or come close to his flight path. Pay attention to changes in wind direction in preparation for landing.
- Keep the pilot advised of the type of aircraft that are being started for flight. Your pilot may be flying an aerobatic pattern and want to know if a 3-D plane is readied for take-off. He might then want to change altitude, flight space and orientation.
- Minimize the distractions to the pilot in flight. The spotter is the eyes and ears for the pilot. Anything that could distract the attention of the pilot should be explained so that the pilot can keep his/her eyes on the aircraft and not look at the distraction.
- A pilot spotter may also assist the pilot at contests, such as our pylon contest, by providing information to the pilot about the laps completed so far.

While this is not a complete list of responsibilities. Some pilots will have specific instructions for their spotters as to what to do, what to watch for, and what to explain. Each pilot and spotter should discuss these responsibilities before each flight.

One thing I'd like to add is that when you choose a spotter that that person has some piloting skills or there might be quite a different ending to your story. The ultimate purpose of a pilot spotter is to increase safety for all. So be a good spotter and help keep our field, and your pilot making great landings.