

STABILIZED APPROACH

For general aviation, an approach can be considered stabilized if all of the following criteria are met:

1. The aircraft is on the correct flight path.
2. Only small changes in heading or pitch are required to maintain the correct flight path.
3. The aircraft speed is not more than the desired approach speed (VREF) +10 knots indicated airspeed and not less than VREF.
4. The aircraft is in the correct landing configuration.
5. Rate of descent is no greater than 500 feet per minute; if a descent rate greater than 500 feet per minute is required due to approach considerations, special attention must be paid.
6. Power setting is appropriate for the aircraft configuration.
7. All briefings and checklists have been accomplished.
8. If the approach becomes unstabilized below the stabilization altitude, an immediate go-around or missed approach must be initiated.

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A general aviation adaptation of the stabilized approach might consist of seven elements. An eighth element simply states that if any one of the first seven is not being met, the approach is not stabilized and must be abandoned.

Pilots might argue some of the items such as altitudes or speeds, wishing to delete or modify some and add others. The version shown here is a good starting point for the general aviation pilot.

The pilot needs to become familiar with the elements of the stabilized approach. This list is not intended to be used as a checklist during the busy approach phase. The first seven elements should be committed to memory so that a mental bell will sound when one or more of the items is amiss.

The concept of the stabilized approach applies to both VFR and IFR operations.