

How to communicate on Advisory frequencies

Guide for uncontrolled airspace communications

1. Introduction

On VATSIM as in Real-Life, you will find yourself operating in non-controlled areas. In Real-life, that happens in unattended aerodromes, like Lausanne or Wangen-Lachen. On VATSIM, that occurs also when stations are not currently serviced by an active VATSIM controller. In these areas, communication is also the key for an immersive, coordinated and safe flight. It requires a different communication structure through blind calls to transmit your intentions on Advisory frequencies.

2. Advisory frequencies

Advisory frequencies can be divided in two categories:

- Universal Advisory frequency, called "Advisory", previously known as "Unicom" which covers in principle all uncontrolled area, from short to long range communications.
- CTAF are specific advisory frequencies generally limited to one or a group of aerodromes in the same area.

2. A. Advisory (ex-Unicom)

Advisory is the new designation of Unicom, which frequency remains 122.800. Advisory is the frequency all pilots are supposed to monitor and communicate on to share their intentions or important information while flying in uncontrolled airspace, except when a "Common Traffic Advisory Frequency" or CTAF is mandatory. For example, in VATEUD countries, CTAF trial has not started yet and Advisory is mandatory in all uncontrolled airspace. To avoid overloading the frequency, the range pilots can hear and communicate on Advisory is limited to a certain radius around their aircraft. That means if you fly around Bern, you won't hear communications between aircraft around Vienna in Austria, but you can catch those from aircrafts in Geneva.

Be advised that a large part of small non-towered airfields in USA have no assigned CTAF. In these cases, you are supposed to communicate on a non-specific CTAF, 122.900. Special rules also apply around Anchorage, Los Angeles and New York.

Outside CTAF areas, you will use Advisory, 122.800.

Since November 2024, use of CTAF applies to VATUSA, VATCAN, VATCAR and VATMEX countries. All preceding information is available on this website: [CTAF Trial](#).

A very useful video explaining how and when to use CTAF in USA is accessible on this [link](#).

3. Phraseology

3. A. What and when should you communicate on advisory frequencies?

Advisory communication's main goal is situation awareness, for you and all pilots around you. It is meant to inform other pilots of your position, your intentions and coordinate when necessary. **It's not a place for small talk.** Therefore you should restrict yourself to important information.

As communications on Advisory and CTAF are not significantly different, we will cover them as one. Sections below will indicate you when it is appropriate to communicate while flying VFR or IFR.

3.A.1. Communications under visual flight rules

For VFR flights, you should communicate:

- before any ground movements
- before entering or crossing a runway
- when departing from a runway
- during different stages of the departure around an airport, from airborne to the CTR exit point (circuit phases and compulsory reporting points)
- during CTR crossing of aerodromes other than departure or destination
- before altitude or flight level changes (in unstaffed controlled airspace)
- to avoid collisions or dangerous situations
- to inform about specific meteorological conditions, like windshear or turbulences
- to coordinate or sequence approaches with other aircrafts

- during different stages of an approach, from CTR entry point to runway vacated

During departure and approach stages, it is essential to communicate intensively when overflying compulsory reporting points (E, W and S on image 1). Don't forget to report points only compulsory on arrival (E2 and W2 on image 2).

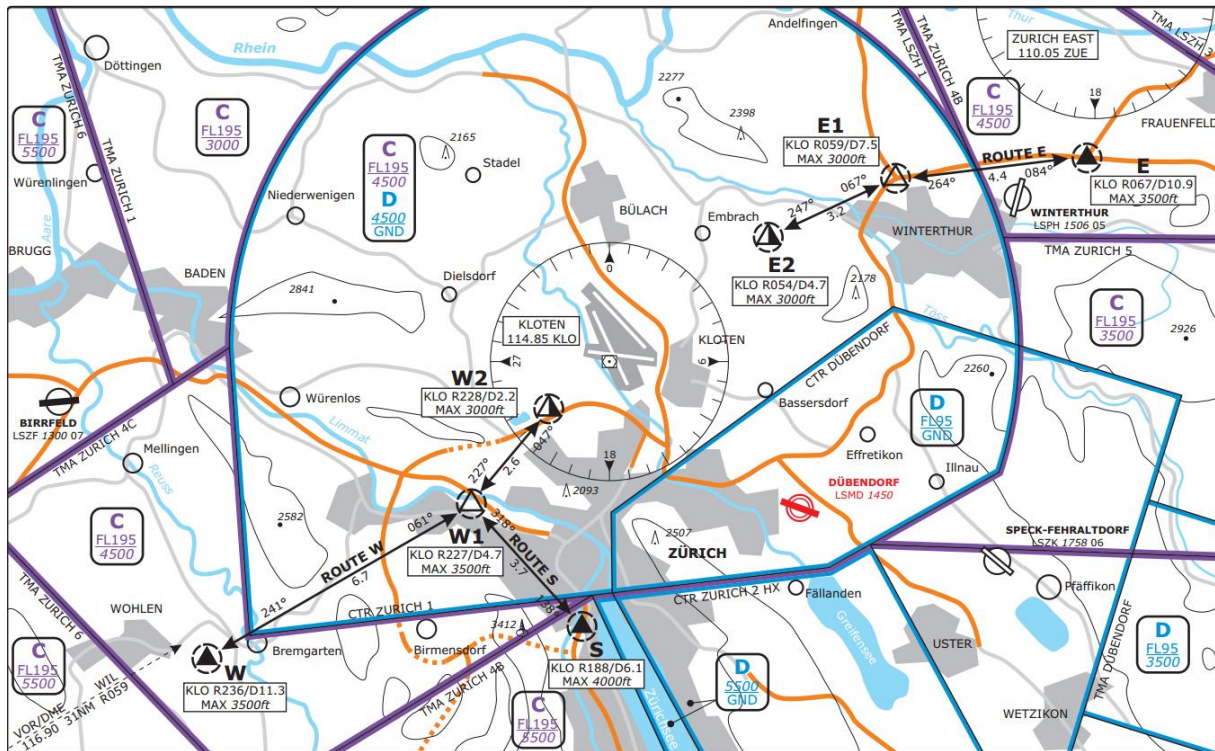


Image 2: capture of Zurich's Visual Approach Chart (VACC CH)

During circuits, you are supposed to report circuit entry, overhead, downwind, base and final (Image 3).

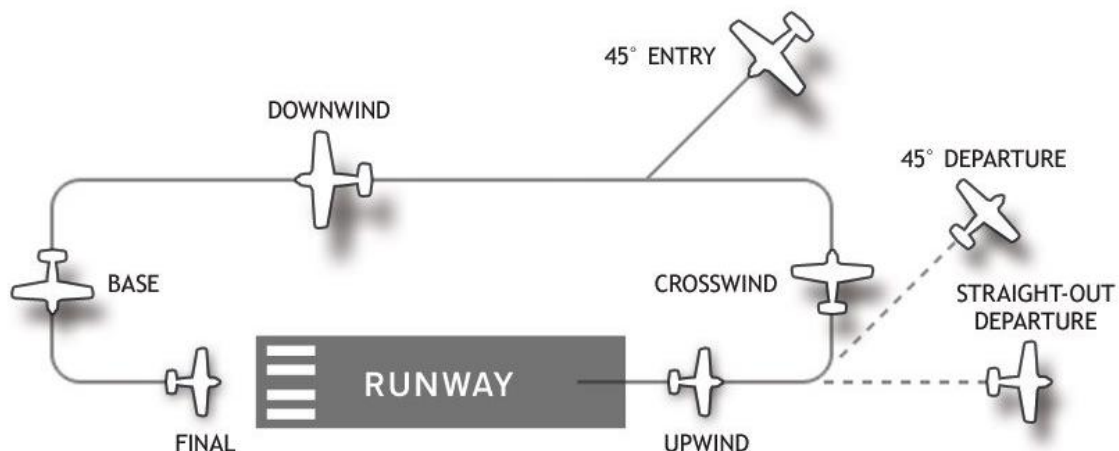


Image 3: Circuit illustration (Learning center / my.VATSIM.net)

3.A.2. Communications under instrument flight rules

For IFR flights, you should communicate:

- before any ground movement
- before entering or crossing a runway
- when departing from a runway
- during different stages of the departure around an airport, from airborne to the last waypoint of the SID
- before altitude or flight level changes
- to prevent collisions or dangerous situations
- to inform about specific meteorological conditions, like windshear or turbulences
- to coordinate or sequence approaches with other aircrafts
- during all different stages of an approach: from the first waypoint of the STAR until you vacate the runway

Communicating before entering the STAR is very helpful, it gives room for coordination and sequencing if many aircrafts enter a very busy uncontrolled airport, like London Heathrow or New York JFK.

3. B. Structure of the call

A blind call, like most calls in aviation have a standard structure:

Who you are calling	GENEVA TRAFFIC
Who you are	HBPRU
Which type of aircraft you are flying (only on first call)	PIPER ARROW
Type of flight (only on first call)	VFR FROM NEUCHÂTEL TO GENEVA
Where you are	ABEAM LA CÔTE
Which altitude or flight level you are at	3000 FEETS
Your intentions	FOR FULL STOP LANDING RUNWAY 22 VIA ROUTE NOVEMBER
Repeat who you are calling	GENEVA

This structure is valid for almost every call on Advisory. During following calls, you can use a shortened callsign. It is important that all other pilots understand in which phase of flight you are and what is going to happen next. It's clear that you don't have to repeat your final intentions, your aircraft and flight type each time.

VFR and IFR blind call examples are illustrated in annex A and B. You can also find some more examples in annex A of our preceding PTD bulletin "VFR tutorial step-by-step" and in the "Cap 413: radiotelephony" available on this [link](#).

4. Advisory practical example

To illustrate what is expected of you during flights in uncontrolled area, we will simulate a VFR flight from LSGG to LSGL and an IFR flight from LSGG to LSZH.

4. A. VFR flight from LSGG to LSGL

This example intends to illustrate what we explained before by simulating all communications for a VFR flight between Geneva and Lausanne via Nyon and Morges (image 4).

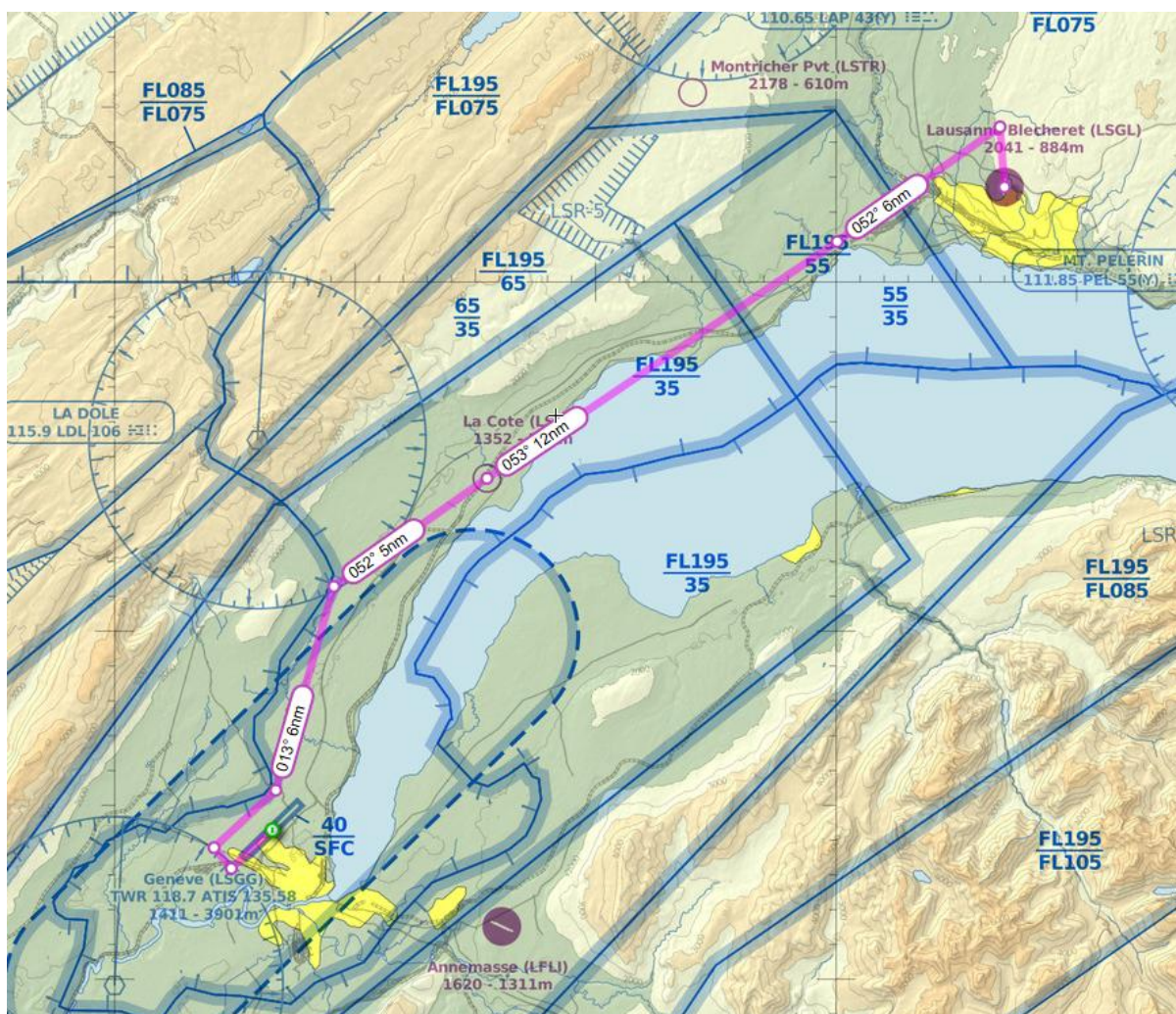


Image 4: Flight plan LSGG-LSGL (skyvector.com)

Flight phase	Blind call
Taxi	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HBPOJ, PIPER CADET, STAND L10, TAXI TO HOLDING BAY P2 VIA P, GENEVA
Runway 22 entry	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HOJ, LINING UP RUNWAY 22 INTERSECTION P, GENEVA
Take-off	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HOJ, DEPARTING RUNWAY 22, OUTBOUND ROUTE NOVEMBER VIA RIGHT HAND CIRCUIT, GENEVA
Downwind	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HOJ, DOWNWIND RUNWAY 22, PROCEEDING NOVEMBER, GENEVA
Reporting N	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HOJ, NOVEMBER 3000FT, PROCEEDING TO LAUSANNE, GENEVA
La Côte crossing	LA COTE TRAFFIC, HBPOJ, PIPER CADET, CROSSING LA COTE CIRCUIT FROM SOUTHWEST TO NORTHEAST AT 3500FT, LA COTE
Lausanne inbound	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HBPOJ, PIPER CADET, WEST OF THE AIRPORT OVER THE HIGHWAY, 3500FT, FOR LANDING RUNWAY 18 VIA SECTOR NORTH, LAUSANNE
Lausanne sector north	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HOJ, SECTOR NORTH 3500FT, FOR LANDING RUNWAY 18, LAUSANNE
Final	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HOJ, FINAL RUNWAY 18, LAUSANNE
Taxi	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HOJ, RUNWAY 18 VACATED VIA D, TAXI TO GA PARKING VIA A, LAUSANNE

4. B. IFR flight from LSGG to LSZH

For our IFR flight example, we will simulate a flight between LSGG and LSZH (image 5), using the following flight plan: SOSAL1R SOSAL N871 BERSU BERSU2G with transition 28.

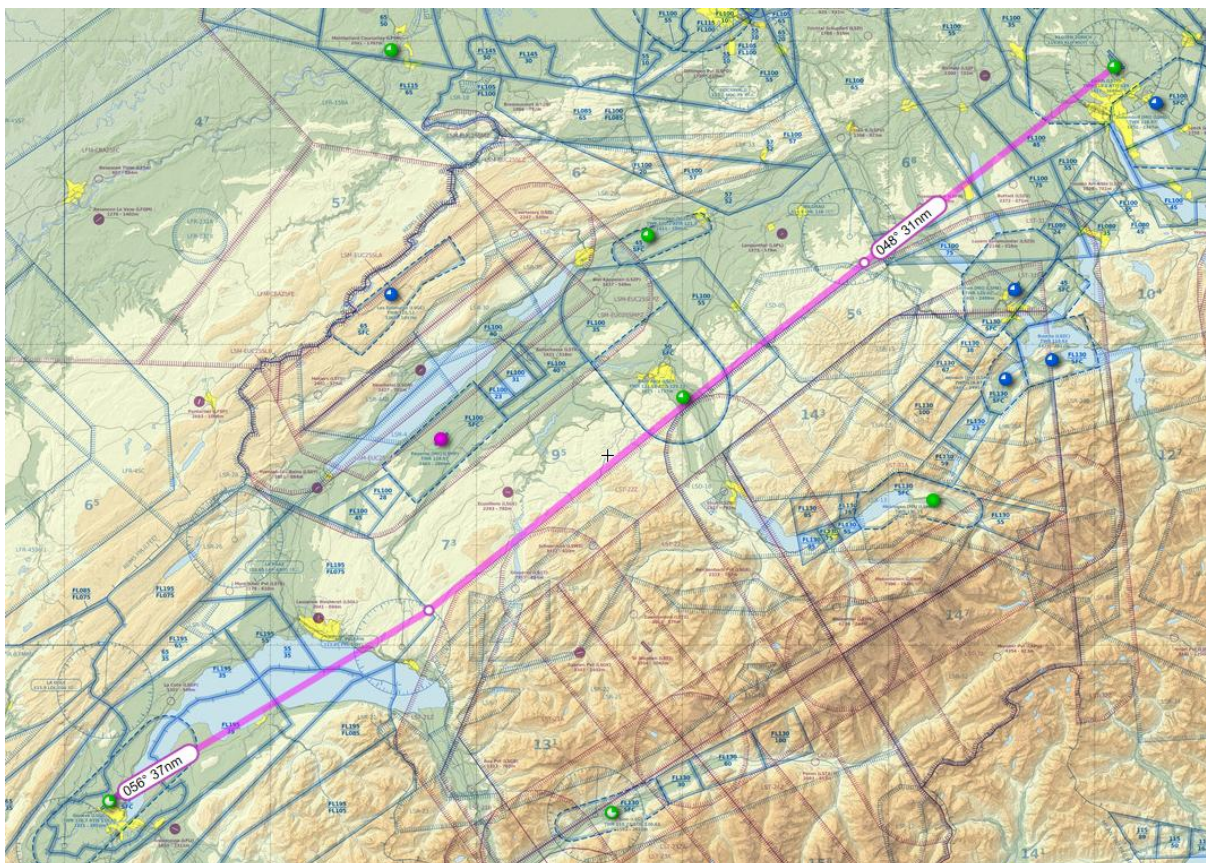


Image 5: Flight plan LSGG-LSZH (skyvector.com)

Flight phase	Blind call
Pushback	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, A320, STAND 4, PUSHBACK AND ENGINE START ON INNER FACING NORTHEAST, GENEVA
Taxi	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, TAXI TO HOLDING POINT RUNWAY 22, VIA INNER, LINK3, OUTER, A, GENEVA
Runway 22 entry	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, LINING UP RUNWAY 22, GENEVA
Take-off	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, DEPARTING RUNWAY 22, SOSAL1R DEPARTURE, GENEVA
Departure	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, PASSERY 7000FT, CLIMBING FL160, GENEVA
Outbound SOSAL	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, SOSAL FL160 PROCEEDING TO BERSU, GENEVA
Inbound BERSU	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, A320, INBOUND BERSU, FL160, DESCENDING TO FL80, FOR LANDING RUNWAY 14 VIA BERSU2G ARRIVAL, ZURICH
Flight level change	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, GIPOL FL80, DESCENDING FL70, ZURICH
Turning final	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, TURNING FINAL FOR ILS RUNWAY 14, ZURICH
Final runway 14	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, FINAL RUNWAY 14, ZURICH

Taxi	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, RUNWAY 14 VACATED VIA H1, TAXI TO STAND A15 VIA J AND INNER, ZURICH
Runway 28 crossing	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWR2HY, CROSSING RUNWAY 28 ON J, ZURICH

Annex A. VFR blind call examples

Taxi before departure	ZURICH TRAFFIC, HBKOJ, GA SECTOR 1 TAXI TO HOLDING POSITION P1, ZURICH
Take-off/departure	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HBPKP, DEPARTING RUNWAY 22, OUTBOUND ROUTE NOVEMBER VIA RIGHT HAND DOWNWIND, GENEVA
Reporting points	ZURICH TRAFFIC, HBPNL, W2, 3000FT, ZURICH
CTR outbound	ALTENRHEIN TRAFFIC, HBPKP, VICTOR 3000FT, CLIMBING 4500 PROCEEDING TO THE NORTH, ALTENRHEIN
Coordination (possible example)	HBKOJ, HBPNL FOR COORDINATION
CTR inbound (5 min prior)	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HBOJI, PIPER CADET, VFR FROM LAUSANNE TO GENEVA, LA CÔTE 3000FT, FOR FULL STOP LANDING RUNWAY 22 VIA ROUTE NOVEMBER, GENEVA
Circuit	GENEVA TRAFFIC, HBOJI, RIGHT HAND DOWNWIND RUNWAY 22, GENEVA
Final	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HBPKP, FINAL RUNWAY 36, LAUSANNE
Taxi after landing	LAUSANNE TRAFFIC, HBPKP, RUNWAY 36 VACCATED VIA B, TAXI TO GA PARKING 1 VIA A, LAUSANNE

Annex B. IFR blind call examples

Pushback	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWISS 242 HEAVY, A330, STAND E56, PUSHBACK AND ENGINE START ON TAXIWAY CHARLIE FACING WEST, ZURICH
Taxi	FRANKFURT TRAFFIC, LUFTHANSA 87, TAXI TO HOLDING POINT L3 RUNWAY 25C VIA N5, L, L3, FRANKFURT
Runway crossing	ZURICH TRAFFIC, SWISS 18, CROSSING RUNWAY 28 ON KILO, ZURICH
Departure	GENEVA TRAFFIC, SWISS 35 YANKEE PAPA, AIRBOURNE, PASSERY 7000FT, OUTBOUND SOSAL, VIA SOSAL 1 ROMEO DEPARTURE, GENEVA
Flight level change	LYON TRAFFIC, EDELWEISS 2355, 2 NM SOUTH AMIKO, FL240, CLIMBING FL360, LYON
CTR inbound (5 min prior)	GENEVA TRAFFIC, TOP SWISS 16 JULIET INDIA, PIBAT FL240, DESCENDING FL200, INBOUND LUSAR FOR ILS RUNWAY 22 VIA LUSAR 2 ROMEO ARRIVAL, GENEVA
Taxi after landing	ZURICH TRAFFIC, AUSTRIAN 41, RUNWAY 28 VACATED VIA E, TAXI TO STAND A15 VIA E, INNER, ZURICH