

Classic Pattern FAQ

What is "Pattern" Flying anyway?

The term "pattern", as it applies to precision aerobatics is defined as a set of aerobatic maneuvers that are performed in a predetermined sequence. When flown during a competition the pattern is judged by two judges for accuracy in regard to the maneuver geometry, positioning, and smoothness. There are several different classes with their own sequence or "pattern". The patterns vary in difficulty from easy entry level to "Wow", that's tough. Takeoffs and landings are also judged, resulting in greater proficiency in those areas. Pattern flying is flying with a purpose.

What do you get out of it?

Good question. Back in the day, if you wanted to be a hot pilot, you would fly pattern. Why? It was simply because pattern fliers were the best pilots. They were disciplined, and practiced doing something specific & precise. They did not just randomly toss their airplanes about. Their flights looked good and had a purpose that still holds true today. Try flying straight and level from one end of the field to another. Not so easy, is it? Learn to fly a pattern proficiently, and there will be no R/C airplane that you cannot fly well, not to mention the satisfaction you'll have flying at a much higher level than the average sport flier!

So what is "Classic Pattern"?

The Classic Pattern era began in the late 1960's and continued through the end of 1991 at which time "Turn Around" pattern became the norm and is still currently flown in competition, including international meets. Classic Pattern is often referred to as the "Golden Age" of pattern flying. Unlike today's pattern flying, which is flown at a much slower airspeed, the schedules did not run together as one continuous sequence. Instead, one maneuver was performed as the aircraft passed in front of the pilot/judges. The aircraft then turned around, and another maneuver was performed, and so it went, until all ten maneuvers were completed. These maneuvers were flown at a much higher airspeed compared to today's pattern, generally in the neighborhood of 100 mph. This speed resulted in very large and stretched out maneuvers. Horizon to horizon slow rolls, huge loops reaching high into the sky and blazing speeds were the standard in those days. These maneuvers are some of the most graceful and beautiful to see if done correctly.

What about the airplanes?

The airplanes of the Classic Pattern era are some of the most awesome model aircraft ever designed! The airplanes used were considerably different than those flown today. The engines were two stroke and were limited to 10cc (.61) displacement back then. There was no gas power, four strokes, or electrics back then. The airplanes were sleek and fast, and tracked like arrows. They were manly, and had a commanding presence in the air. If you have ever seen the Blue Angels or the Thunderbirds fly at an air show, you will understand the feeling.

Do I need to compete?

No, you can practice pattern and reap all of the benefits, applying them to whatever facet of R/C that you enjoy.

Do I need a fancy/complicated/expensive airplane?

No. Any aerobatic sport airframe will do, although to really appreciate what classic pattern is all about, a Classic model would be preferred. Fortunately, there are a couple of ARF choices to get you in the air quickly. The Tower Kaos is an excellent, basic pattern model that flies very well. The Hangar 9 Phoenix 7 is a bit more advanced model but can be put in the air relatively quickly and is also an excellent flier. They are also reasonably priced, and are great values for the money. Or you can build your own aircraft.

Why the interest today?

Pattern has evolved just as things have a tendency to do. The airplanes got larger, more complex and more expensive. The pattern has become a continuous sequence (called "Turnaround" pattern), which is much like an IMAC sequence. Lots of guys that flew pattern back in the day moved on to other things when "life" got in the way such as wife, kids, career, etc. Once those commitments ran their course, they once again had time to return to playing with their model airplanes. Seeing what pattern had become, they thought it was not so great, and started looking for what they loved in the days gone by. These days there is a resurging interest in what we now call Classic Pattern to recapture something great that has been lost to the sometimes-misguided evolution of an activity once held dear.

