



LOOKOUT

How long does it take from spotting an aircraft to hitting it – 30 seconds to a minute, perhaps? Research shows that in normal circumstances the average pilot needs anything from nine to 12.5 seconds from spotting another aircraft to processing the closure geometry and manoeuvring to avoid a potential collision in a controlled manner. You may only have 5 seconds or so between the eye detecting an aircraft head-on and impact. A good visual scanning technique is essential.



COMMUNICATE

The radio will never supersede a good lookout, but it certainly helps improve everyone's situational awareness. You can only learn so much about other aircraft near you by keeping a good lookout – listening and talking gets you the bigger picture. There are a number of Air Traffic Services that can help improve situational awareness if pilots use them.



ELECTRONIC CONSPICUITY

Being seen isn't always as easy as it should be, even in perfect visibility – it's surprising the number of Airprox where one of the pilots said they never even saw the other aircraft. But there are things that can be done to make your aircraft visible both physically and electronically.



INSIGHT

An Airprox can start even before a pilot gets in the aircraft, but it doesn't take long to cut the risk factors with a bit of planning and revision of the rules and procedures. Checking details of the flight, the route, Air Traffic Services and procedures at the destination before flying is essential.



PRIORITISING TASKS

If look out should remain a pilot's top priority, dealing with distractions quickly and properly needs to be a close second. Becoming task-focused to the detriment of lookout is all too easy. 'Aviate, navigate, communicate' is the pilot's mantra, and lookout is a key part of 'Aviate', the number one priority.



DEFENSIVE FLYING

Vigilance involves keeping a careful watch for possible danger or difficulties of which there are plenty that can lead to an Airprox – but it also means being considerate to others, flying defensively to avoid any issues and maximising safety margins – all of which are a vital part of airmanship.