

Intro to Controlling Live for Newly Certified S1s

This document sets out some tips, hints, and advice for controlling live on the network once you have been certified as an S1 at ZSE. It is meant as a “ready reference” during your initial live sessions controlling on your own. It supplements and does not replace your formal training or the official APS, SOP and Training documents available on the ZSE website or official VATUSA or VATSIM policy. Refer to the [ZSE document center](#), as well as [VATUSA Academy](#) if you are unsure of certain procedures or are looking for additional information.

Good luck and have fun on the scopes!

Before Taking Over A Position (and Before You Leave!):

1. Before logging onto a position, determine who is already controlling, and follow vZSE 7110.00 to ensure you are able to control the position you are signing on to. You can check using VATprism or VATSpy, but remember these and other on-line VATSIM resources often have a reasonable time lag, so the only way to be certain which positions are manned is to connect with CRC as an OBS.
2. If your position is free, logon using the appropriate position and rating. CRC will automatically assign you a callsign, like “PDX_GND”, or sometimes “PDX_1_GND” when relieving a position that is already online.
3. When taking over a position, do not activate session once you have connected. Wait until the controller handling your position has given you a brief and transferred control, but do listen on the frequency through the audio client. Ideally do the brief in Discord, but it can be done through the chat feature in CRC.
4. A “real world” checklist for handover follows the mnemonic **WEST**
 - a. Weather: Current ATIS; is the field in VFR or IFR conditions, is there a weather trend? Any SIGMETs within 50 nm of airport?
 - b. Equipment: radio/radar, etc. This is generally n/a for VATSIM but you can discuss here any preferences such as use of flight strips for handoffs, etc.
 - c. Situation: other controllers on? Any preferences for Tower/Approach/Center; runways in use; active SUAs? Events/fly-outs going on?
 - d. Traffic: proceed around the airport noting status of each aircraft (taxiing, cleared, not called yet, etc.)
5. End a brief by asking if there are any questions and end with new controller stating, “My control, [operator initials]” acknowledged by transferring controller stating “Your control, [operator initials]”. This is when you can prime up!
6. When the handover of between different control positions (e.g. TWR handing over to new GND controller, or GND handing over to DEL) be sure to advise all aircraft to switch frequencies using both voice and text.
7. If you are going to be logging off and there is no one online above you, then you simply inform each aircraft that PDX_GND is closing, and to monitor CTAF 123.775. You should also post over the chat: “PDX_GND is now closed. All aircraft monitor CTAF

123.775.” (replace this frequency with the appropriate CTAF frequency if working another airport).

8. Ideally, give aircraft and other controllers at least 15 minutes warning before logging off and broadcast this over the frequency at 15, 10 and 5 minutes before your intended logoff time.

Priming Up:

9. Make sure you download an appropriate audio client for controlling, such as [Audio for VATSIM](#) (fewest features), [TrackAudio](#), or [VectorAudio](#) (no longer recommended for new users). Sometimes it is necessary to run the Audio for VATSIM client as Administrator.
10. After it is installed, log in with your VATSIM credentials and set up the settings window correctly with you microphone, push to talk, and other settings, then click OK.
11. Click the Connect button in CRC. If you are using TrackAudio or VectorAudio, you should see your position name and frequency displayed in your audio client, after a short delay. You can then click “Connect” .
12. Ensure the RX button on your audio client are enabled for your primary frequency (probably PDX_GND).
13. Once you have been given control of the position or if no one is online above you, select Activate Session (right below Connect) in the CRC menu. Once you are activated, ensure the TX button on your audio client is enabled.
- 14. Be connected to Discord voice server during your controlling session and undeafened. You can move channels if you are overwhelmed with chatter but should remain available via Discord voice at all times during your session.**
15. Congratulations! You are live!

Getting Situated:

18. Your first responsibility as a ground controller is to understand the conditions on the airport, including weather and any relevant NOTAMs in effect. You will also want to preplan for certain routine coordination with other controllers.
19. Weather: Check the METAR for the airport. Would VFR flight be advisable? Which runways will be in use based on the prevailing wind (check SOP-100 to ascertain the correct runway based on wind conditions)? If the current altimeter is below 29.92, what is the lowest flight level that is available? Has the controller with tower responsibilities put up a voice ATIS for the airport, and if so, what ATIS is current? Check the TAF for the airport to get a sense of the weather trend—is the wind shifting or increasing/decreasing in intensity? Are storms or other more significant weather developing?
20. NOTAMs are published on the ZSE website. Real world NOTAMs are available in Skyvector, Airmav and Flightaware, but be sure to determine with the CIC (controller in charge) whether or not these are being applied in your facility. Due to pilots using different scenery and other operational practicalities, many real-world NOTAMs are not simulated in VATSIM.

Controller Coordination:

21. The following are topics that may be useful to coordinate in advance with other controllers, during the initial briefing or early in your controlling session. Coordination on these and other topics become more important with heavier traffic or during events.
 - a. Which runways are Tower operating?
 - b. What is Tower controller's preference for authorizing runway crossings?
 - c. When would Tower like you to instruct pilots to switch to Tower frequency, at the hold-short or passing a particular runway intersection? Contact versus monitor?
 - d. Are intersection departures permitted? If so, from where?
 - e. For arrivals, to avoid congestion and potential conflicts between taxiing aircraft, consider how you would prefer Tower to exit aircraft from the runway (perhaps further downfield will facilitate ground operations—particularly at KSEA where the Bravo taxiway can become congested).
 - f. Consider coordination with Tower to ascertain aircraft parking preferences in advance to facilitate ground operations once the aircraft has been switched to you after vacating the runway.
 - g. Which runway(s) will be used for aircraft in the pattern? Left or right traffic?
 - h. Any preferences for VFR departures (altitude, directions to leave controlled airspace)?
 - i. Does Radar Controller prefer advance warning for VFR flight following?
 - j. Does Radar Controller have preferences for non-SID departures? Where the initial fix for a flight plan corresponds to a SID but no SID has been filed, would the Radar Controller prefer you assign a SID (or at least suggest it to the pilot)?
 - k. To allow for expedited departures during periods of heavy traffic, a Radar Controller may request sequencing of departures to avoid successive aircraft on the same SID or departure course. Take this into account when taxiing aircraft.
22. Most controller coordination is best done through Discord. If the controller is unavailable to communicate via voice, text chat via controller-client software is permitted.
23. Formal communication with another controller includes:
 - a. Initial call: PDX_GND: "Local, Ground".
 - b. Holding response: PDX_TWR: "Standby". (If they are busy)
 - c. Go-ahead response: PDX_TWR: "Go for Local" or "Ground, Local."
 - d. Then a discussion may happen, and once you have completed it and agreed how to handle the request or issue, you sign off with your operator's initials: PDX_GND: "Roger, left traffic rwy 10L, SF". PDX_TWR: (signing off): "PT".
 - e. Remember when contacting a Radar Controller to identify both the TRACON and their position (e.g. "Portland Approach" and not just "Approach").
24. You may need to coordinate/communicate with other controllers from time to time, or sometimes with pilots. For this purpose, CRC chat is often the only practical means of communication, so it is a good idea to keep the messages window open in CRC so you can see if someone tries to contact you this way.

VATSIM Supervisors:

25. VATSIM Supervisors have responsibility for monitoring the network, assisting controllers and pilots and enforcing VATSIM policies. They are there to help and should be thought of as a resource and not a policeman!

26. Supervisors are there to assist you! They have enhanced access to VATSIM and can access information about aircraft (and controllers) on the network that mere mortals are unable to see.
27. To call a Supervisor, you use the “dot wallop” command in the CRC command line. The .wallop command should be used when you have a pilot that is argumentative, unresponsive but on a movement area, unable to comply with instructions, etc. Best practice is to include enough information in the command to allow the Supervisor to action your request immediately.
 - a. Examples of .wallop commands:
 - i. .wallop ABC123 in my airspace not contacting ATC, and not responding to multiple requests for contact. No immediate conflict.
 - ii. .wallop ABC123 using rude and vulgar language on frequency.
 - iii. .wallop Need help with someone who has a hot mic.
 - iv. .wallop ABC123 not squawking Mode C and says he doesn't know how to.
 - b. Examples of poor .wallop commands;
 - i. .wallop pilot not responding
 - ii. .wallop noob who is an idiot
 - iii. .wallop Help!
28. A Supervisor might also contact YOU while you are controlling, almost exclusively through the CRC private chat feature.
29. There are any number of reasons a Supervisor might send you a message. The most common is if you have set your visibility range too high. Higher visibility ranges use more bandwidth on the network (which is provided to VATSIM users at no charge!), so it is important to minimize your range as much as practical, and certainly no higher than VATSIM policy. If a Supervisor notifies you of this, simply apologize, inform the Supervisor using chat that you will reset the range immediately, and then do so. There should be no reason this will result in any further action.
30. If a Supervisor (or VATSIM Administrator) requests you log off the network for any reason you should do so. If you feel this is unfair or has not been explained properly, take a screenshot of your chat with the Supervisor and bring the matter to the attention of the ZSE ATM, DATM, or TA. Do not negotiate or argue with a Supervisor! This can only make matters worse!

New-to-VATSIM pilots, non-English speakers, trolls, troublemakers, know-it-alls and realworld pilots:

31. Troublemakers: these types of pilots may attempt to argue with you or other pilots, use the text or voice frequency inappropriately, taxi without clearance, and many more ways of causing trouble. It's best to sound confident and be authoritative. If the problems continue, after trying to solve the problem, call for a supervisor using “.wallop” as described above.
 - a. If an aircraft is taxiing without clearance on a movement area (taxiways/runways NOT the ramp) then you may send a ‘contact me.’ Once the pilot responds, simply tell them nicely that they need to contact you for clearance first next time. If they do not contact you and continue to taxi, use .wallop to call a supervisor.
32. Real-world pilots and hardcore know-it-alls. Occasionally, you may encounter pilots who are real-world pilots or are using unfamiliar, technical sounding phraseology with which you are unfamiliar. These pilots typically fall into one of two categories:

- a. Genuine pilots. If you believe they are genuine and sincere, you should accommodate their requests to the extent possible. Feel free to ask for clarifications. You should feel free to inform them you are a new controller and you would appreciate their guidance so you can handle their request. VATSIM is a learning environment and most real-world pilots will be only too happy to provide an explanation for whatever they've said over the frequency.
 - b. Bullies. If you believe a pilot is trying to embarrass you by making hyper-realistic demands, you should follow your training and feel free to inform the pilot "I am following my training here at the Seattle ARTCC, which may not follow real-world procedures in all cases. If you want to offer feedback, please do so on our website." If the pilot persists, you should not hesitate to contact a Supervisor using .wallop as Supervisors are very experienced controllers and can assist you in resolving issues with pilots.
33. Non-English Speakers: most Non-English Speakers will struggle with voice communications, and in particular with the many different dialects that will emerge during these communications. Use text, either to supplement voice comms or, if necessary, to replace it. Be patient with pilots who struggle with English! ZSE is fortunate to have international traffic and we want to encourage pilots to fly in our airspace even if their English isn't perfect!
34. New-to-VATSIM Pilots: You may be the very first contact that a new pilot encounters on VATSIM. What a terrific opportunity to win a pilot over to ZSE! The manner in which you handle this situation may have a profound effect on a new pilot. Our aim should be to encourage new pilots so they return to fly again. Being unsupportive, impatient or dismissive might deter a new pilot from flying on VATSIM again—now is not the time for rattling off an IFR clearance at top speed. You should ALWAYS accommodate a new VATSIM pilot to the greatest extent practicable. Adapt your pace and phraseology to ensure the pilot understands your instructions and requests. Workload permitting, use private chat to correct errors as it avoids embarrassing the pilot over the frequency. Also, you may provide this link to new pilots: <https://my.vatsim.net/learn>, it contains helpful tools for new pilots.

Closing Remarks:

35. With any questions be sure to ask someone in Discord, or contact training@zseartcc.org. We are here to help!