

The 7-Day Weather Strategy

Five gates between the idea and the takeoff. One question each, the products that actually work at that range, and a decision you write down.

TRIP	DEPARTURE DATE	ROUTE	ALTERNATE	TAIL #
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Five gates: T-7, T-5, T-3, T-1, and the morning of. Each one has a question, a short list, and a decision. Everything's on aviationweather.gov. The [Prog Chart](#) reaches Day 7; TAFs, the GFA, AIRMETs and winds aloft are all inside about a day. So the first two gates read the pattern, airport numbers start at T-3, and the TAF lands at T-1. [PlaneWX](#) scores each day against your own minimums, which gives you one comparable number at every gate. Set those minimums on the card below before you start.

1 Seven Days Out — Frame the Trip

T-7

What's the pattern look like, and what would make me stay home?

- ☐ Enter the trip in your **EFB** — ForeFlight or Garmin Pilot **FIRST MOVE**
Route, altitude, times, alternates, aircraft profile. Everything this week comes off this one entry — weather links, chart binders, the flight plan, your kneeboard sheets. Type the route once. → foreflight.com · fly.garmin.com
- ☐ Push the same trip into **PlaneWX** **SCORE 1 OF 5**
Your baseline. It won't tell you much today — write the score down anyway, because you're going to compare against it four more times. → app.planewx.ai
- ☐ Open the **Prog Chart** and drag it out to your date **START HERE**
One page, one slider, out to Day 7. You're after geography, not detail: is there a front or a low anywhere near your route on your day? Jot down what you see. → aviationweather.gov/gfa → [Prog Chart](#) · [full-page version](#)
- ☐ Is the system **ahead of you, behind you, or sitting on your day?**
Three days early or three days late and you're probably fine. Right on the day is the one to keep an eye on. That's about all anyone can tell you a week out.
- ☐ Set your **personal minimums in PlaneWX** — or fill in the bail-out card below **THE WHOLE POINT**
Numbers, not adjectives. "Marginal" isn't a limit. 1,500 and 4 is. → app.planewx.ai
- ☐ Write down a **Plan B, with a departure time on it**
Drive, airline, go a day later, pick a different airport. Give it a departure time. Without one it loses to the airplane every time.

PlaneWX will hold these for you. Set your personal minimums there and it scores each day against your numbers instead of generic categories. Otherwise fill in the card with a pen. Never set minimums before? Cirrus's **Know Your Limits** walks through it. → app.planewx.ai · cirrusaircraft.com/knowyourlimits

BAIL-OUT CARD — SET THESE TODAY

LIMIT	DEPARTURE	DESTINATION / ALTERNATE
Ceiling Yours, not the approach minimum.		
Visibility		
Surface wind / crosswind Count the gusts.		
Ice Freezing level, tops, and whether you've got an out.		
Convection What you won't launch into.		
Fuel on arrival The number that ends the flight — not the legal reserve.		

DECISION AT THIS GATE

Nothing to decide yet — you can't know at a week out. Write down what would stop you, while there's no airplane booked and nobody waiting on you.

2 Five Days Out — Test the Pattern

T-5

Is the pattern holding, or is it moving?

- ☐ Re-run **PlaneWX** and compare it to Day 7 **SCORE 2 OF 5**
You're reading the change, not the number. Two scores side by side already tell you more than either one on its own. Log both in the trend table below. → [app.planewx.ai](#)
- ☐ Drag the **Prog Chart** back to your date — has the timing moved?
A front six hours later is a different trip. One that slides every time you look is one nobody's pinned down yet. → [AWC Prog Chart](#)
- ☐ Catch the local TV forecast for the destination
Not for numbers — for the story. A TV meteorologist will tell you in thirty seconds which day this week is the shaky one, which is exactly what you want today. → [weather.gov local forecast](#) if you can't get the local station.

DECISION AT THIS GATE

Call it **Likely**, **Uncertain** or **Unlikely**, and tell your passengers today. A Tuesday warning makes a Saturday scrub easy. A 6 a.m. surprise turns into pressure on you.

3 Three Days Out — Commit or Don't

T-3

Is this still worth an airplane, a passenger, and a tank of fuel?

- ☐ Run the **Prog Chart** across your whole departure day **NOT JUST YOUR ETD**
Timing's tight enough now to pick an hour. Drag through the full day and look for the window — morning ahead of the front, evening behind it. Moving three hours beats cancelling. → [AWC Prog Chart](#)
- ☐ Check **MOS** for departure, destination and alternate **FIRST REAL NUMBERS**
The only thing that'll give you a forecast ceiling and visibility for your airport this far out — MOS runs to 3 days, where the TAF only reaches 24. Easiest place to read it is your EFB: ForeFlight keeps it on the airport weather page under MOS. Raw bulletins are on NOAA's site if you'd rather. → [MOS bulletins](#) · [how to read one](#)

- ☐ Compare today's **PlaneWX** score with Day 7 and Day 5 **SCORE 3 OF 5**
Up, flat, or down. Three scores is where the direction starts to show. → [app.planewx.ai](#)

- ☐ Pick the **real alternate** and check it'll be open
Minimums, runway length, fuel, hours. One that closes at 5 p.m. isn't an alternate. → [FAA NOTAM search](#)

- ☐ Rough out the **fuel plan** with a headwind you wouldn't enjoy
No winds aloft this far out, so assume the bad case. If it only works with a tailwind, it doesn't work.

- ☐ Hold what you're seeing against your **bail-out card**
Card in hand, out loud.

MOS is model output, not a forecaster. It'll hand you a ceiling and visibility three days out, which nothing else will, but it's statistics off the GFS with nobody checking the result. Treat it as a strong hint and let it move your confidence, not your minimums. The forecaster's version turns up with the TAF at T-1.

DECISION AT THIS GATE

Lock the **route, altitude, alternate and fuel plan** — or say out loud that this one probably isn't happening. Cancelling three days out costs almost nothing.

4 Day Before — First Go / No-Go

T-1

Real forecasts finally cover the flight. Do they match the plan?

- ☐ Read the **TAFs** for departure, destination and alternate **THE BIG ONE**
24 hours at most fields, 30 at some, so tonight they reach tomorrow. First thing all week that a human wrote for your airport. Everything before this was pattern — this is a forecast. → [aviationweather.gov/taf](#)
- ☐ Work the **GFA** tabs — **Ceiling & Visibility, Clouds, Icing, Turbulence**
Same map, a tab per hazard, slider out to 18 hours. Ceiling & Vis is "can I get in." Clouds is "where are the tops." Icing and Turbulence are "what's the ride." One catch: since March 2026 the CONUS turbulence forecast stops updating at hour 16, so 17 and 18 just repeat it. → [aviationweather.gov/gfa](#)
- ☐ Check **G-AIRMETs** and any **SIGMETs**
Three-hour steps out to 12 hours plus an outlook — ice, turbulence, low IFR, mountain obscuration. SIGMETs, Convective SIGMETs and CWAs draw right on the GFA. → [aviationweather.gov/gairmet](#) · [GFA overlays](#)
- ☐ Pull **winds and temps aloft** for your altitude
In range now, so the fuel plan gets real numbers instead of your pessimistic guess from T-3. The temperature column gives you the freezing level. → [aviationweather.gov/windtemp](#)
- ☐ Read today's **PIREPs** along your route **HIGH VALUE**
Somebody flew this route today in close to tomorrow's air, and told you the tops, the ice, the ride and the bases. Beats a forecast every time. → [PIREP layer on the GFA](#)
- ☐ Check **NOTAMs** and **TFRs** for both ends and the alternate **NOT WEATHER**
Closed runway, approach out of service, ballgame TFR. None of it's weather and all of it stops the flight. Better to find it now than at the run-up. → [NOTAM search](#) · [tfr.faa.gov](#)
- ☐ Re-run **PlaneWX** — it's got real forecasts to work with now **SCORE 4 OF 5**
Every score before this was built on pattern. Tonight there are TAFs, so the number means something — and it's scored against the minimums you set on Day 7. Log it. → [app.planewx.ai](#)
- ☐ File the **IFR flight plan**
→ [1800wxbrief.com](#) or your EFB

DECISION AT THIS GATE

Go, no-go, or delay — and say it out loud. Then write down two things: what time tomorrow you'll look again, and the one number that flips it. "I'll check at 0600, and if the destination TAF still says 400 and 1 when I'd get there, we're not going."

5 Day of Flight — Does Reality Match?

T-0

Is the weather doing what it was told?

- ☐ Get a **standard briefing** — your EFB or 1-800-WX-BRIEF
Your 14 CFR 91.103 box. Everything above was strategy; this is the legal, current picture. → [1800wxbrief.com](https://www.1800wxbrief.com)
- ☐ Read the **METAR trend** over the last 3–6 hours at all three airports **HIGH VALUE**
One METAR's a snapshot. Six in a row tell you whether the ceiling's lifting, holding, or coming down an hour ahead of the TAF. → [aviationweather.gov/metar](https://www.aviationweather.gov/metar)
- ☐ Compare **today's TAF to last night's**
If it got worse overnight, the weather's arguing with the forecast. The weather wins. → [aviationweather.gov/taf](https://www.aviationweather.gov/taf)
- ☐ Check **radar and satellite**
Both sit on the GFA's Observations tab with the surface obs and fronts, or on their own pages. → [radar](#) · [satellite](#) · [GFA observations](#)
- ☐ Check **SIGMETs, CWAs and current G-AIRMETs**
→ [aviationweather.gov/gairmet](https://www.aviationweather.gov/gairmet) · overlays on the [GFA](#)
- ☐ Read **this morning's PIREPs**
Anything from the last hour especially. → [PIREP layer on the GFA](#)
- ☐ Final **PlaneWX** score **SCORE 5 OF 5**
Five scores against your own minimums, side by side. If today's the worst of them, you saw it coming and you already wrote down what you'd do. → app.planewx.ai
- ☐ Run your **risk assessment** — PAVE, or your club's form
Weather's one letter out of four. A pilot who slept badly and has to be home by six is carrying risk that no chart shows. → [PAVE assessment](#)
- ☐ Make the call when you said you would, and **tell people either way**
- ☐ Print the **Kneeboard Pro** sheets and brief your **turn-around point**
Name the fix and the fuel number where you divert, before you start the engine. Airborne, at night, in weather is a rotten time to invent a limit. → [kneeboardpro.imctvmedia.com](https://www.kneeboardpro.imctvmedia.com)

DECISION AT THIS GATE

The real go, plus your turn-around point: a fix, a fuel number, an alternate. Decided on the ground and written on the kneeboard.

Forecast Trend Log

FILL AT EACH GATE

One line per gate, five lines by the morning of the flight. A score of 70 that was 90 two days ago is worse news than one that's sat at 65 all week. That only shows up if you wrote the earlier ones down.

FORECAST TREND LOG — ONE LINE PER GATE

GATE	PLANEWX SCORE	PROG CHART — WHERE IS THE SYSTEM?	CEILING & VIS (MOS from T-3, TAF after)	BETTER OR WORSE THAN LAST GATE?
T-7				
T-5				
T-3				
T-1				
T-0				

The grey cells are grey on purpose. Nothing forecasts a ceiling for your airport until MOS reaches it at T-3, so leave those two empty. It's why the PlaneWX column runs all the way down and that one doesn't.

Five Rules Worth Remembering

- 1 Trend beats snapshot.**
Always ask what it was yesterday. Which way it's moving is the most useful thing you'll learn all week, and you can't see it unless you wrote the last one down.
- 2 Pick your minimums before you care about the trip.**
Numbers you choose on Day 7 and numbers you choose on the morning of the flight aren't the same numbers. Only one set is honest.
- 3 Past a couple of days out, you're reading the pattern, not the weather.**
Aviation forecasts live inside about a day. Everything before that just tells you where the systems are — plenty to decide whether to keep going, as long as you don't mistake it for a ceiling and a visibility.
- 4 When two products disagree, believe the worse one.**
TAF against the GFA, either one against a fresh PIREP. The gap between them is the uncertainty. Put it in your margin and move on.
- 5 A Plan B without a go-time is not a plan.**
If the drive has to leave at 7 a.m. to work, then 7 a.m. is a decision point — not something you get to keep thinking about while the weather makes up your mind for you.

Product Reference — How Far Out Each One Works

All of these are on aviationweather.gov — free, no account, same products your EFB shows you. The two FAA links at the bottom are the exceptions.

PRODUCT REFERENCE — HOW FAR OUT EACH ONE WORKS

PRODUCT	HOW FAR OUT	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Prog Chart The one page that spans the whole week.	now → Day 7	Where the fronts, lows and precipitation will be, on one slider. The only product on the site that reaches your date a week out.
MOS In your EFB's airport weather tab.	to 3 days	Forecast ceiling, visibility and wind for one airport, further out than the TAF reaches. Model output, no forecaster involved. Ceiling and vis come as numbered categories — key here .
TAF	24–30 hr	A forecaster writing for your airport: ceiling, visibility, wind and weather, hour by hour. The most important product on this sheet.
GFA — Ceiling & Visibility	to 18 hr	Can you get in, and can you get back out. Colour-coded VFR / MVFR / IFR across the whole route.
GFA — Clouds	to 18 hr	Bases and tops. Whether you can climb above it, and what you break out into.
GFA — Icing	to 18 hr	Where the ice is and at what altitudes, by severity. Check it by level, not just on the map.
GFA — Turbulence CONUS guidance is flat past hour 16.	to 18 hr	The ride, by altitude. Worth checking for passenger comfort as much as for safety.
G-AIRMET	to 12 hr, + outlook	Areas of ice, turbulence, low IFR and mountain obscuration, in 3-hour steps.
SIGMET / Convective SIGMET / CWA Overlays on the GFA .	now → a few hr	The serious stuff, issued as it happens. If one is on your route, that is the whole conversation.
Winds & Temps Aloft	6–24 hr blocks	Whether the trip fits the fuel plan, which altitude to ask for, and where the freezing level sits.
METAR	right now	What is actually happening at the airport. Read the last several in a row, not just the newest one.
PIREP Layer on the GFA .	right now	What another pilot just flew through. The only report that comes from your altitude.
Radar / Satellite	right now	Precipitation and cloud, live. Fastest way to see whether the forecast is verifying.
NOTAMs / TFRs FAA, not aviationweather.gov.	right now	Not weather, but the same kind of no-go. Check all three airports, every time.

Not on the list: model charts, ensemble spread, Skew-T soundings, forecaster discussions. Good tools, more decoding than a go/no-go needs. The [help pages](#) cover them if you want them.

Note. For flight-planning discipline and pilot education. This checklist does not replace a required preflight weather briefing under 14 CFR 91.103, and it does not supersede any regulation, aircraft flight manual, or your operator's minimums. Forecast product ranges and availability change — verify current products at the source. The pilot in command remains responsible for the go/no-go decision.