The Airport Diagram—More Than Just A Map, Way More

Sometimes the hardest part of flying to or from an unfamiliar airport is getting around on the ground. In the air, you likely have visual references, a panel overflowing with data, and a straight line to fly. On the ground, you’re running an unfamiliar maze in search of your runway before departure, or a bathroom and a Snickers bar after landing.

Not wanting to ask for progressives (why tie up the radio, right?), you dig out your trusty Airport Diagram. Using it like a roadmap, you taxi with confidence to your destination and then put it away. Sound familiar? If so, you’re missing out. “The Airport page is more than just an airport diagram,” explained Craig Thighe, Jeppesen’s Research Solutions Strategist and a 3,500-hour pilot. “There’s really a lot of information on that sheet of paper.”

A Quick Trip Around the Airport Diagram

The amount of data on the Airport Diagram will surprise you. Below is a quick look at the sections and the critical information contained in each:

1. **Airport Heading**—More than just a quick introduction to the airport, the Heading section includes: ICAO and IATA airport codes, field elevation, lat/long coordinates, full airport name, index number, and revision/effective dates to ensure you’re using the most current chart.

2. **Briefing Strip™**—The heart of the Communications section is the Briefing Strip. It reduces your workload by listing crucial radio frequencies in the order you need to depart. For KCOS, that means ATIS, Clearance, Ground Tower, and Departure. It also provides details like radar facilities, part-time communications, and VOT Frequencies when appropriate.

3. **Planview**—A birds eye view of the airfield, the Planview is loaded with data and visual references for safe ground operations. This includes: geo-referencing, lat/long (edges), scaled runway lengths and widths, taxiway designators, approach lighting, windsock location, perimeter features, service roads, runway bearings, thresholds, airport reference point, structures, and special notes. Pay special attention to the hotspot identifiers. They will alert you to areas of possible congestion and potential incursions.
Additional Runway Information—Despite a Planview brimming with information, there is still more data to help you get in and out of any airfield. The Additional Runway Information section details runway lighting and types, VASI/PAPI locations/information, runway visual ranges (RVRs), displaced threshold information, usable distances, land and hold short distances (LASHO), and runway surface types.

Take-off and Alternate Minimums—Standard minimums can quickly become obsolete depending on the airfield. On each airport diagram, you will find lifesaving non-standard take-off and alternate minimums, as well as obstacle departure procedures for each runway on the airport.

A Peek Behind the Strip
To most, the Briefing Strip seems like an obvious solution for delivering key radio frequencies in the order you need them. Better still, the strip offers flexibility to adapt for each phase of flight. Too often, simplicity like this is dismissed as common sense. Before you do, we think there’s something you should know.

In developing the Briefing Strip, Jeppesen worked closely with the Airline Transport Association Charting Committee during a time when cockpit resource management (CRM) was the driving force behind new flight deck protocols. The results of a human factors study initiated by that group permeate every facet of the Briefing Strip design. And when we say everything, we mean everything from the font choice and type size, to the decision to make it a strip instead of a list, a box, or bullet points. In fact, the U.S. government adopted it as the industry standard.

Over two decades later, the Briefing Strip has proven timeless and remains largely unchanged. You’ll see it on every Airport Diagram, as well as other types of IFR charts featured in upcoming Chart Clinic Confidential webinars.

Mim’s The Word
Safety of flight starts on the ground. Traffic congestion can build within several miles around, and a few thousand feet above, any airfield without warning. Know your “mims” by giving the Take-off & Obstacle Departure Procedures section of the Airport Diagram as much study as you do the Planview:

- **Take-off Minimums**—Sometimes standard minimums are raised because of terrain, obstacles, or departure procedures. This section of the Airport Diagram will clearly detail the non-standard minimums for each runway. Even if they don’t apply to you, it’s worth knowing how they impact the traffic moving around you.

- **Alternate Minimums**—The decision to divert to an alternate airport comes with an immediate need for information, including landing minimums at the new destination. When familiarizing yourself with an alternate airport, you’ll find standard and non-standard minimums right on the Airport Diagram. In the case of KCOS, that puts 14 different sets of minimums at your fingertips.

- **Obstacle Departure Procedures (ODP)**—ODPs are not typically assigned an IFR clearance for Part 91 flight. It’s up to you to know them. That’s why Jeppesen puts ODPs right on the Airport Diagram—so they are there when you need them. Look for much more on ODPs in our next webinar.
Airport Safety is A Top Priority
For decades, the FAA has made runway safety a top priority. The close proximity of airplanes, vehicles, people, support equipment, structures, terrain, and other obstacles in and around familiar or unfamiliar airfields require you to be at your best. The Airport Diagram gives you everything you need to move into, around, and out of any airfield and corresponding airspace precisely, confidently, and safely.

Nathan Kurth, a DoD Aviation Information & Data Liaison for Jeppesen and a 14-year pilot, thinks you’ll find studying the different sections of the Airport Diagram to be time well spent. “There is so much good data available on the Airport Diagram. But pilots who don’t fly everyday may not be aware of the little pieces of information that will make their lives so much easier and safer when flying.”

“There’s so much more that goes into it than just a pretty picture,” concluded Emmy Jacobson, an 18-year pilot and EFB Deployment Manager for Jeppesen. “Most pilots wouldn’t believe the amount of background, analysis and questioning that goes into all of our charts. We do it so pilots know they have a source they can trust.”

Reserve Your Spot and Sign Up for Our Newsletters
The Airport Diagram is just the beginning. To maximize your Chart Clinic Confidential experience, please register now for the remaining webinars in our series. And if you haven’t done so yet, be sure to sign up for future installments of this newsletter.

Do you know a pilot who can benefit from this newsletter and our webinar series? If so, please forward this newsletter to him or her today!

A Webinar for All Phases of Flight
Jeppesen’s Chart Clinic Confidential is a five-part webinar series created to help you optimize each phase of flight. Register for one of the upcoming webinars or download the recording of past webinars by clicking on the button.

Cleared For Takeoff
Conducted Thursday, May 15
In this first of a five-part webinar series, you’ll get detailed info on airport diagrams, including how charts are indexed, revision and effective dates, lighting, usable runway lengths, alternate and takeoff minimums and more.

Climb Via
Thursday, June 26 @ 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific
Follow along in part two of our series as we take a hypothetical flight through a typical obstacle departure procedure. The discussion will also include a standard instrument departure.

Checking In At
Thursday, August 14 @ 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific
Join us for part three in our series as we take our flight to the air. Topics will include enroute charting tips and critical symbology.

Descend Via
Wednesday, September 24 @ 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific
Part four in our series will explore a standard airport arrival as our flight approaches the destination.

Cleared For Approach
Thursday, November 6 @ 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific
We’ve arrived! Now what? In part five, we will discuss approach charts in detail and teach you tricks for finding information quickly.