

The Greater Hartford Orbital Speed Task (GHOST)

The Greater Hartford Orbital Speed Task (GHOST) was created to:

- Encourage the development and practice of good fundamental cross-country skills, flight planning and in-flight decision making
- Provide a reliable yardstick for measuring improvements in cross country speed
- Provide an arena for informal competition (using the Sports Class handicap system)
- Eliminate excuses for aimless local flying and skill stagnation

What it is

GHOST is a 33 nm, roughly circular course centered on the start-finish line directly over HXF, rounding a sequence of mandatory turnpoints, plus radial start and finish legs of from 5 – 7 nm each. None of the turnpoints is more than 7 nm from HXF and, from 2,500 feet and above in good VFR conditions, both the next turnpoint and HXF can be seen from every other turnpoint.

The six turnpoints must be rounded in sequence, but the course can be run in either direction (CW or CCW) at the pilot's option. The pilot is also free to choose his or her first turnpoint but, in order to complete the circuit, that first turnpoint must be re-rounded before heading back to HXF to finish. Thus, the total course length – start to finish – will vary slightly depending on which initial turnpoint is chosen. No matter; this is a speed, not a distance, task. The radial distance from HXF to each turnpoint is set out in the rules, and twice the distance to the chosen turnpoint will be added to the 33 nm circuit (yielding total task lengths of 43 – 47 nm [69 – 76 km]) to compute your speed from the recorded elapsed time. The optimum choice of initial turnpoint will depend on winds, time of day and other factors.

Turnpoint cameras and dataloggers are not required (although you may wish to practice with them). You time your own flight, and we will trust you to report accurately. GHOST works entirely on the honor system.

What it is not

GHOST is not a reason to do anything stupid, hurt yourself or damage equipment or property. Pick your conditions, plan your flight carefully and -- if things don't go well -- abandon the task in time for a safe landing.

GHOST is also not a hairy-chested competition or a means to establish pecking order. It is meant for fun, learning and self-improvement. Let's try to keep it that way.

Notes for student pilots

While GHOST is, in part, intended for inclusion in the student curriculum, it is not to be attempted (in whole or in part) unless and until a club instructor has thoroughly briefed you on the task, reviewed your flight planning, and given you the appropriate **sign-offs** for cross-country flight.

Consider making your first GHOST attempts one, two or three-turnpoint efforts. You do not have to fly all the way around the course to make it a useful learning experience.