

ATC Phraseology - A VATPAC Guide

Philosophy

Within VATPAC airspace, radio phraseologies enable us (ATC and pilots) to communicate in the most efficient way possible. As a general principle all radio communications should be "Clear and Concise". Standard phraseology helps us to convey the required information in the shortest and clearest language possible. While standard phraseology is expected and accepted, reasonable variations are of course permissible, inevitable and commonly encountered.

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Introduction

This guide is designed to assist VATPAC controllers to deliver correct standard phraseology at all times. Within Australian airspace, there are several "bad habits" that creep into a controller's vocabulary from real world sources as well as virtual sources from around the VATSIM network. It is important to remember that VATPAC ATC and pilots are generally not professionals and a certain degree of tolerance should be practiced, especially when dealing with our newer members/controllers/pilots.

Standard Phraseology

The following tables will present phraseology to be used for many situations encountered while controlling on the VATSIM network. These phraseologies are just a snapshot of all those possible but represent the most common (and therefore the most commonly mis-communicated) on our network. Please take note of the structure of the phraseology as well as the example given for each situation. Items in {braces} are optional components.

Situation	Structure	Notes/Examples
Aircraft requests clearance:		
Clearance unavailable, delayed.	[Callsign] {g'day}, Stand by {number #}.	Do not say: "ABC, clearance on request, stand by."
Clearance now available.	[Callsign], Clearance available.	"ABC, Clearance available." (note: "advise when ready to copy" is redundant, excessive phraseology.)
Giving the clearance.	See Moodle.	
Pushback.	[Callsign] push approved {traffic}.	Pushback is an approval, NOT a clearance. The pilot is partially responsible for separation on the apron, therefore relevant traffic should be given.
Start Clearance.	[Callsign] start approved.	Start clearance is only required when notified by ATIS, NOTAM, ERSA or AIP. In such cases... Aircraft: "QFA123, Request push and start?" ATC: "QFA123, push approved."
Pilot reads back correct clearance	[Callsign].	"Virgin 487." (note: "readback correct" is NOT standard phraseology and SHOULD NOT be used. There is no need to say "advise when ready to taxi".)

<u>Aircraft Calls for Taxi</u>		
Taxi Instruction	[Callsign], taxi to [runway][bay] via [taxiway(s)], {hold short/cross [taxiway/runway]}.	"Virgin 487, taxi to runway 16 via G, A, hold short E." "QFA494 taxi to the bay via F, E, P."
Aircraft to hold current position. Resume taxi.	[Callsign] hold position. [Callsign] continue taxi.	
Aircraft to follow/give way to other traffic.	[Callsign] follow {traffic} {taxi instruction...}	"QFA420 follow company 737 taxi to runway 27 via Papa."
<u>Takeoff</u>		
Aircraft on published SID	[Callsign][Runway] Cleared for takeoff.	"QFA25, runway 17 cleared for takeoff."
Aircraft on radar SID	[Callsign] assigned heading [left/right] [heading] <u>or</u> {fly runway heading}, [runway] cleared for takeoff.	"HUT, assigned heading right 010, runway 34 cleared for takeoff."
VFR aircraft departing the circuit.	[Callsign][direction of turn] <u>or</u> {depart on <i>circuit leg</i> }	"HUT, depart on downwind, runway 11 cleared for takeoff."
VFR aircraft for circuit traffic	[Callsign]{circuit direction}{reporting point} [runway] cleared for takeoff.	"HUT, left circuits, report downwind, runway 11 cleared for takeoff."
Contact departures	[Callsign] contact departures airborne, [runway] cleared for takeoff.	Note: If departures frequency was not given or has changed since Airways Clearance. Frequency must be supplied.
Line up	[Callsign] line up and wait [Callsign] behind the [arriving/departing][traffic], line up behind.	Note: The word "behind" is used twice for emphasis.
<u>Takeoff Clearance Nuances:</u>		
<i><u>Wind information:</u> This practice comes from listening to real world towers where the winds at the runway actually differ from the METAR. Giving wind info is <u>not required</u> with a takeoff clearance on VATSIM but if wanting full realism, why not vary the wind info you give by 5 or 10 degrees or 1 or 2 knots?</i>		
<i><u>Report Airborne:</u> TWR controllers should not be asking this. Aircraft should be instructed to contact DEP or switch to UNICOM airborne. For TMA and ENR controllers offering downward services, use this at discretion when you feel it's necessary. Pilots should report airborne to the appropriate surveillance service without prompting.</i>		
<u>Landing</u>		
Cleared to Land	[Callsign]{runway} cleared to land.	Note: Runway is optional. Use when two active runways are in use to avoid confusion.
Wind Information	[Callsign] {winds [wind info]}{runway} cleared to land.	Again optional. Use to enhance realism when threshold winds differ from published METAR.
Continue Approach	Nil.	If landing clearance is unavailable, then just respond with callsign. Of course the pilot will continue approach! Aircraft: "Tower g'day QFA345 ILS 34L." Tower: "QFA345 g'day."
Traffic Ahead	[Callsign]{traffic}{number #}	"QFA345 traffic is company 767 on 4 mile final, number two."
<u>Approach</u>		
Cleared for ILS from STAR	[Callsign] cleared [APCH name] approach {report}	"ANZ132, cleared ILS runway 16 approach, report established." (Report established is not always necessary, use sparingly only where you require the pilot to report.)
Cleared ILS from vectors	[Callsign] [Position] [Turn] [Altitude] [Clearance]	"ANZ132, position 5nm NE of BOL, turn left 210, maintain 4000 until established, cleared ILS runway 16 approach."
Cleared Visual Approach	[Callsign] [runway] cleared visual approach {report}	"ANZ132, runway 16 cleared visual approach, report turning final."
Vis Apch tracking instruction.	[Callsign] [instruction] [runway] cleared visual approach {report}	"ANZ132, track for 5nm final runway 16, cleared visual approach."
Circuit Entry		"HUT, enter left downwind runway 12, cleared visual approach."

Non-Precision Approach	[Callsign]{tracking} cleared [APCH name] approach {report}.	"VOZ1327, track direct HB, cleared VOR runway 30 approach, report turning inbound."
Enroute/TMA Control Instructions		
Vectoring	[Callsign]{reason}{turn direction}[heading]	"ANZ132, for sequencing turn left heading 180."
Change of level	[Callsign]{reason}{climb/descend} to [altitude/level]	"ANZ132, climb to F240."
- when expecting aircraft to maintain the assigned level.	[Callsign]{reason}{climb/descend} to maintain [altitude/level]{report}	"UTY5441, for separation descend to maintain flight level 320, report maintaining."
Weather deviation	[Callsign][miles][left/right] or track approved [report clear]	"QFA25, up to 10nm left of track approved, report clear."
Resume from vector or deviation	[Callsign]{position} resume own navigation [track][onwards clearance]	"QFA200, position 30nm W of RIVET, resume own navigation direct RIVET, planned route." "QFA200, position 30nm W of RIVET, resume own navigation direct RIVET, thence RIVET9 arrival runway 34L."
Published hold	[Callsign] {reason} hold at [position][level]{requirement}{expected delay}	"QFA200, for sequencing, hold at TARAL flight level 210, requirement to reach F210 by TARAL, expect APCH time 32."
Non-Published hold	[Callsign] {reason} hold at [position][level]{requirement}[turn direction][leg dist/time][inbound course]	"VOZ418, delay is required, hold at MAXEM, F340, right hand 2min turns, inbound course 250."
Taxies at uncontrolled aerodrome.	[Callsign] {greeting} [squawk][traffic]	"HUT, g'day squawk 3245, traffic is ODE IFR Baron approaching from the North, estimating the circuit time 50."
Leaving CTA on descent	[Callsign] {at} cleared to leave control area descending, [traffic][area QNH].	"WZE, when ready cleared to leave control area descending, no reported IFR traffic, area QNH 1012."
Entering CTA on climb	[Callsign] enter control area climbing [level], cleared to [limit] via [route].	"WZE, enter control area climbing F280, cleared to Sydney via Canberra planned route."
Entering CTA maintaining	[Callsign] cleared to enter controlled airspace tracking [heading/track], maintain [level].	"HUT cleared to enter controlled airspace tracking direct CB, maintain 6000."
Cancel SARWATCH	[Callsign] SARWATCH terminated.	

Practice Makes Perfect

The above examples are as stated, just examples and variations are acceptable provided the correct information is conveyed. A prime opportunity exists to practice these phraseologies when traffic levels are low and you have only a few aircraft under your control. By practicing these standard phraseologies when it's quiet, you are more likely to find controlling during busy periods more manageable by making these standards come to you as second nature. This leads to being more efficient with radio communications leaving you (and the aircraft your control) more time to perform other tasks.

Expect Information

A common mistake controllers, make is to place vital information with "expect information". Pilots by default, are not required to read back "expect information" and as such ATC should never provide information a pilot what would usually be required to be read back prefixed by the word "expect". A common example is...

"ABC, expect ILS approach Runway 16R" 📍
"ABC, Runway 16R, expect ILS Approach." 📍 (Pilot reads back "Runway 16R, ABC.")

Phraseologies to Avoid

There are some common phrases that from time to time creep into our vocabulary that are not standard phraseology and furthermore, should not be used. From time to time it is helpful to be reminded of them so as to direct controllers back onto the straight and narrow.

- "Radar Contact" - This should be "Identified".
- "Flight plan closed" - should never be used.
- "Clearance on request" - "Standby" is all that's needed. Of course clearance is on request, they just requested it!
- "Read back correct" - NOOOooooo! Acknowledge the readback with the callsign only or make corrections. This one is popping up quite a lot lately.
- "Position and Hold" - Use "Line up and wait".
- "Recleared flight level...." - RECLEARED is used to alter a previous clearance, not to issue a new level. Use "Climb to" or "Descend to" or "Maintain amended".

Some of these are affectionately known as "americanisms" but not all of them come from the states. In the US controllers have wordiness problem. If at any stage you feel you are using too many words to pass a message, you probably are!

As always, if you have any questions about phraseology, contact your local VATPAC training representative or post a question on the forums.