

If your clearance is “CRG V51 OVIDO. Direct VRB V159 ATONE FLL,” check the approved route points, and cross out OMN V3 on your printed flight plan. Then you could write “OVIDO” below the crossed-out part of the printed flight plan.

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
CRG V51 ~~OMN V3~~ VRB V159 ATONE FLL
OVIDO

The technique of checking applicable points on your route, crossing out points that are not applicable, and writing in changes is so much quicker and easier than re-writing the entire route. Re-writing the entire route is re-inventing the wheel.

Here's the truth of the matter. The more you can streamline your writing, the easier it is to make your writing keep pace with the controller's clearance delivery.

Dancing with the Controllers

Think of clearance delivery as a dance between you and the controller. The controller leads the dance and you follow. You need to keep up with the controller, matching him step for step. You don't want to fall behind because once you fall behind, it's hard to catch your writing up to what the controller says next.

You don't want to get ahead of the controller. Actually, you can't get ahead, because you don't know what the controller is going to say next. Ideally, if you pace your writing properly, your pen follows the controller's voice. That's why it's so important to only write what is absolutely necessary. You don't want to get bogged down copying the clearance because any extra, unnecessary writing may cause you to fall behind.

No sense in wasting your focus on writing things that are already in print, when you can spend your time better by listening. Trust me, when a busy controller speed-talks a clearance to you, you need to be listening more and writing less.

I'll get to speed-talking in a moment. Right now, let's cover how to make writing easier.

Shorthand Takes Longer

So you ask, “Don't I need to write everything?” To which I say, no. As you saw earlier, you can reduce your workload by checking off the en route points that are already printed on your flight plan. There are other ways to save writing, and it all begins with clearance copying shorthand.

Perhaps you have heard of clearance shorthand. Here's an example. If the controller clears you to “Climb and maintain 3000,” you could write:

↪ 3,000.

Cool, right? Let me ask you something. Have you ever been cleared from takeoff to descend and maintain 3000? I suppose if you made a takeoff from, say, a 10,000-foot high mountain ledge it would be possible to descend and maintain 3000 feet after takeoff, but that's not likely. In the real world, after every takeoff, you are going to climb and maintain some altitude. So why even bother with the ↪ symbol? Why not just write “3,000”?

While we are on this topic, there's really no point in writing out “3,000” because you are always given an initial altitude that is in the thousands. No one gets, “Climb and maintain 30,” or even, “Climb and maintain 300.” Take advantage of this. Write “3” whenever you are told to climb and maintain 3,000. If you get an oddball altitude, such as 3,500, you can write “35.” Applying this one simple shortcut saves writing 2 to 4 characters right off the bat. That's what I call shorthand!