

RUNWAY SIGNS AND AIRPORT MARKINGS

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You might find it difficult to stop for a stop sign if each time one was posted it looked different from other stop signs. When cues are familiar both in how they look and where they are placed, we are more likely to see and respond to the message.

We are creatures of habit. Marketing research tells us that customers look for the known, the familiar, and are most likely to respond to a message if they see it at least seven times. It is that sameness that helps create a response the advertisers want.

Standardization is a form of sameness and repetition.

Airport markings are being standardized. That makes it good for us as pilots. A sign at one airport will look the same and mean the same at any airport. With runway incursions increasing at busy towered airports, this signage can be your ticket to trouble free ground navigation.

Signs are placed ahead of intersections and on the left side or both sides. They are mounted high enough to be seen by the large jet drivers and the general aviation pilot. At Denver International, taxiing at night can seem a little like going through a Christmas tree maze. There are green lights, blue lights, wagging yellow lights, red ones and white lights. Here, and at many busy airports, at night and in low visibility, these signs are lighted from behind.

Airport signs follow a specific color convention. Red means danger. A red sign with white letters means you are approaching a runway. The sign may give two numbers such as 12-30, or 30-12. In the first instance, 12-30, the red sign indicates that the approach end of runway 12 is to your left as you look at the sign. In the second example, 30-12, the 30 end of

the runway is to the left as you face the sign. When only one number is used, say 19R, that indicates you are actually at the approach end of runway 19R.

Black signs with yellow frames and yellow letters can name either a runway or a taxiway. These signs say you are on whatever runway or taxiway named. They are easy to spot and easy to distinguish from the other signs. They answer the "where am I" question. These signs will be at the side of both runways and taxiways.

Yellow signs with black letters and arrows can be the most confusing of all runway signs. These signs, however, give very specific information about where you are and how to proceed to where you want to go.

They provide general taxiing direction to a named runway. They also guide us by showing the direction to turn at the next intersection to maneuver onto a named taxiway. On the runways, these yellow signs shows the pilot the direction to turn to exit the runway onto the named taxiway. Sometimes there will be a series of yellow signs with arrows going in different directions. To get to your destination, find the taxiway you want and turn your airplane onto the pavement that corresponds to the direction the arrow is pointing.

Many airports are now making the yellow hold bars and some taxiway yellow stripes easier to see by outlining them with black paint. It is critical to recognize and respond to the hold bars properly. On the taxiway side of an intersection there are two solid yellow lines nearest the pilot with double dashed yellow lines on the far side, or runway side. These are the HOLD lines.

When you are coming off a runway, the dashed lines will be nearest you. You "dash" across the broken lines and then the solid ones to completely exit the runway. You are not officially clear of a runway until all of your aircraft has

crossed over those solid lines.

We manage to maneuver our cars through busy streets and intersections safely with the help of stop signs and other markings. Today's standardized airport markings provide the same safety protection. When we understand the meaning of the signs and know where to expect to find them on an airport, we will get to and from parking safely.