



MetroAir Virtual Airlines

VATSIM GUIDE V 1.0



Photo by Lindle Romero

NOT FOR REAL WORLD AVIATION

GETTING STARTED

This guide is designed to introduce the basics of VATSIM into your virtual flying experience. In this guide you will learn more about VATSIM as an organization, how to get started with VATSIM, where to find VATSIM information and more. This guide *will not* cover information on general Air Traffic Control or how to communicate with Air Traffic Control. If you are looking for information on Air Traffic Control and communication, please visit our Air Traffic Control guide.

VATSIM is comprised of a number of servers and volunteers who run it all and provide ATC service to virtual pilots. VATSIM Air Traffic Controllers train to learn proper radio phraseology and procedures for the areas which they control. While controlling flights, they will ensure you are spaced a safe distance from other virtual traffic. Controllers can provide services for a number of different positions ranging from Clearance Delivery through Center. In addition to making flights a little more realistic and getting a chance to fly with company traffic you'll also earn faster hours and additional MetroMiles.

We hope this guide gives you a good understanding of how VATSIM works and how to get started with VATSIM.

VATSIM BASICS

To summarize the “[About VATSIM](#)” page, it is a virtual air traffic simulation network formed in 2001 by aviation enthusiasts. It is comprised of about 200,000 members who share a passion for aviation and virtual air traffic. While a pilot gets to connect to the VATSIM network and experience realistic air traffic control services, it gives an air traffic controller an opportunity to get a sample of what it’s like to be sitting in the air traffic control tower.

WHAT DOES THE PILOT GET?

Making use of VATSIM makes things a little more realistic. Gone are the days of pressing numbers to indicate you are asking for clearance to an internal Flight Simulator Air Traffic Control program. You can now talk (or type) to a real person. Just as MetroAir prides itself in realism, VATSIM controllers are trained to issue realistic air traffic control policies and procedures set by the FAA.

With over 200,000 members, VATSIM is a great resource for virtual aviation enthusiasts. In addition to the regular air traffic control services, they provide forums for the world-wide community to gather. While you’re sitting in your den or bedroom with the yoke and throttles in your fingers you may meet someone from across the country or world.

MetroAir pilots are encouraged to use VATSIM for realism and to provide a flight hour bonus for all pireps flown while connected to VATSIM. Look in the MetroAir pilot handbook for updated information on VATSIM bonus policies.

JOINING VATSIM

If you are not already a VATSIM member your first step is to get registered on the VATSIM network. Visit the [Join VATSIM](#) link and complete the steps described on the Join VATSIM page. At the time of this writing there are 3 simple steps.

1. Read, understand, and agree to the VATSIM User Agreement and Privacy Policy.
2. Read, understand, and agree to the VATSIM Code of Conduct.
3. Sign up at the VATSIM link provided above. The registration process should only take 2 minutes. Remember to confirm your email address to complete your registration.

BEFORE CONNECTING TO VATSIM

Before connecting to VATSIM all pilots are encouraged to review the [Quick Start Guide for Flying on VATSIM](#). The guide will go over some of the important things you will need to know or do before connecting.

While we’ll try to address the basics in this guide, there is a wealth of information found in the quick start guide and the [Pilot Resource Center](#), often referred to simply as the PRC. The PRC covers a wealth of information that not only helps you on VATSIM but can help you learn how to be a better pilot. Inside you’ll find everything from the basics of VATSIM to how to fly IFR flights.

Before connecting is also a good time to ensure your flight simulator is installed and configured properly. You want to ensure a smooth experience while connected to VATSIM so do everything you can to prepare before you connect.

Once you’ve configured your pilot client and are ready to finally connect to the VATSIM network, you’ll want to make sure your aircraft is positioned on the ground at an airport, either at a gate, or somewhere on the parking ramp, before connecting. Connecting to VATSIM while on a runway, taxiway, or in mid-air can cause interruptions to existing traffic flow online.

PILOT CLIENT

After you have completed the registration process you will need to download and install the pilot software. For flight simulator, there are currently 2 approved flight sim clients: FSINN and SquawkBox. More information and links to download both are available

on VATSIM's [Pilot Software](#) page. Both programs will work with MS Flight Simulator to exchange information between your simulator and VATSIM. For additional help on installing a flight sim client please contact a MetroAir instructor or inquire within the MetroAir forums.

SQUAWKBOX

SquawkBox is recommended for new users. It is simpler to get started with. It is built into flight simulator and is a smaller install making it quicker to learn which is important when you're getting started. There are some disadvantages of using SquawkBox; it doesn't have as many tools to use and often the paints on other aircraft are very basic.

FSINN

FSInn is a great client which provides a lot of tools such as a push back tool and time sync. FSInn also allows you to associate different aircraft with different paint liveries which makes flying in events much more enjoyable. While it has some great benefits it is a little harder to get set up and there are some workarounds to get everything working.

FINDING AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS & OTHER PILOTS

When planning to fly a flight on VATSIM you'll want to be able to plan in advance to see where air traffic controllers are providing services so you'll have a better idea when you'll need to contact them. Many pilots also look to see where ATC coverage is found so that they can try to fly within controlled airspace to maximize their flight experiences.

There are a number of different ways to find out where other pilots are flying and where air traffic controllers are providing coverage.

VATSIM STATISTICS CENTER

The [VATSIM Statistics Center](#) provides a textual representation of all controllers and pilots currently logged into the VATSIM network.

SERVINFO

ServInfo is an older program which is no longer being supported but still works and provides useful information. Just like the Statistics Center, ServInfo will provide information on who is currently logged into the VATSIM network. Since it is an application that you run on your machine, it requires internet access to receive updates. It also allows you to view the data in different ways. From sorting to filtering by country, airport, or even callsign, ServInfo provides an excellent way to view the data. ServInfo also provides a map to better visualize where controllers and pilots are as well as their detailed information such as controller's ATIS messages and pilot's aircraft details and flight plans.

For more information and to download ServInfo, visit <http://hangar.avsim.net/utis/servinfo/home.htm>.

VATSPY

VATSpy can be considered a replacement for ServInfo. It has all of the abilities of ServInfo and works a bit more efficiently on current processors. VATSpy is the recommended utility for finding who is online.

For more information and to download VATSpy, visit <http://www1.metacraft.com/VATSpy/>.

GETTING HELP AND SOLVING PROBLEMS

VATSIM FORUMS

The VATSIM forums can be found at <http://forums.vatsim.net>. Similar to the MetroAir forums, the VATSIM forums are available to help you ask questions and share experiences with your fellow VATSIM pilots. The information in the forums ranges from solving technical issues, aviation and air traffic control policies and procedures, upcoming VATSIM events and news from the community. To log into the VATSIM forums you will need your VATSIM ID and password.

SUPERVISORS

VATSIM supervisors are members who were selected by the VATSIM Board of Governors to ensure the network is a safe environments and that everyone is obeying the user agreement and code of conduct. Supervisors are normally seen with a SUP suffix on their callsign like EJ_SUP. Supervisors are responsible for the entire world which can get busy when they are trying to resolve problems. It may take them a little bit of time to respond. Please only contact them in extreme situations such as when another pilot is disregarding the code of conduct and creating an unsafe environment.

To contact a supervisor, you can issue a **.wallop** command in your flight sim client. Example: `.wallop ABC123 is buzzing the terminal making it impossible for flight operations at KMCI.`

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

While we hope that none of our pilots will require conflict resolution you should be aware of it. As stated in the PRC, “the department of conflict resolution hears all matters which involve disciplinary action against members for an alleged violation” of community rules. To find out more about what to expect if you do find yourself in an issue, visit the PRC section on [conflict resolution](#).

ADDITIONAL HELP

If you find yourself asking a question about VATSIM, feel free to ask on the VATSIM forums or on MetroAir’s forums.

VATSIM VIRTUAL AIRLINES AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS AFFILIATES

Members from all kinds of virtual airlines fly on VATSIM. While MetroAir is a passenger virtual airline that is not based a real world counterpart, you can find a virtual airline for just about every real world passenger and cargo airline that exists today. Some virtual airlines even try to preserve history and model airlines of yesteryear. In addition to airlines, you’ll find pilots flying military and government missions. VATSIM typically considers groups like this Special Operations. Examples are Virtual Air Force and Virtual U.S. Navy. Many of the credible virtual airlines and special operations become VATSIM VA Partners. Partners are required to have a minimum of 10 active pilots flying on VATSIM within the last 90 days, a link to VATSIM on their webpage, and been in existence for at least 3 months. You can be assured that MetroAir has been a VATSIM VA Partner since early on when MetroAir was first founded.

To find other VATSIM VA and Special Operations partners, visit <http://linksmanager.com/vatsimvas/>.

UNDERSTANDING VATSIM RATINGS

PILOT RATINGS

VATSIM members are issued different ratings depending on their piloting and controlling capabilities. All new members of VATSIM hold an OBS rating which stands for Pilot/Observer and is sometimes referenced as P0. After completing VATSIM approved training courses at an Authorized Training Organization (ATO), it is possible to climb the ratings ladder. At the time of this document, VATSIM allows ratings from P1 through P3. VATSIM is developing additional programs up through P9. To see all of the ratings for VATSIM and to see general descriptions for each rating, visit the VATSIM [Pilot Training](#) page.

CONTROLLER RATINGS

Just like pilots, controllers also train to attain new ranks. Unlike pilots, controllers must be trained before providing air traffic control services. Controllers are not promoted until they undergo rigorous training and pass exams. The controller ratings you may generally see are below. Note that while the descriptions tend to be accurate, different areas may have alternate training procedures and policies so you may find some controllers with a lower rating providing more expanded services depending on the area's policies.

Pilot/Observer (OBS) – Students who have not yet been certified will control under this rating. Generally they must be under supervision of a VATSIM instructor.

Ground Controller (S1) – Controllers with an S1 rating are permitted to provide ground and delivery control services.

Tower Controller (S2) – Controllers with an S2 rating are permitted to provide tower services.

TMA Controllers (S3) – Controllers with an S3 rating are permitted to provide departure and approach services.

Controller (C1) – Controllers with a C1 rating provide Center services.

Senior Controller (C3) – Controllers with C3 ratings also provide Center services but have typically been a controller for a long period of time or who have excelled within VATSIM making them eligible for a higher rating.

Instructor (I1) and Senior Instructor (I3) – Controllers with an I1 or I3 rating provide training to student controllers.

CONTROLLER CALLSIGNS

Typically you will see controllers with callsigns of MCI_APP which would stand for Kansas City Approach. The common air traffic control callsigns end with a suffix of DEL, GND, TWR, DEP, APP, and CTR.

DEL – This stands for clearance delivery. You will only contact this pilot for IFR Clearance

GND – This stands for ground services. You will be in communication with a ground controller while within movement areas of an airport (but not within the apron)

TWR – This stands for the tower controller. You will be in touch with the tower controller at any time you are about to enter a runway, either for takeoff or landing

DEP/APP – This stands for departure and approach controllers. Typically you will only see APP unless it's busy due to an event. These controllers are responsible for providing services around the airports and will hand you off to a Center controller or a Tower controller depending on if you are departing or arriving.

CTR – This stands for center controllers. Center controllers will communicate with you and provide separation while you are climbing to your cruise altitude above 18,000 ft. It can take a long time to pass through a center's airspace so expect to speak with CTR for a while.

FSS – This stands for flight service stations. Typically flight service stations are for VFR traffic but in VATSIM FSS callsigns typically provide oceanic coverage.

Sometimes you may see various manipulations of callsigns to indicate they are a member of the organizational leadership. Examples are ZJX_ATM to indicate the member is the Air Traffic Manager of the Jacksonville ARTCC. Some other local callsigns are TA (training administrator) and EC (events coordination). You may also see callsigns ending in INS or MTR. Typically these members are actively providing instruction or mentorship to another controller. You should know that you should never connect with a controller rating or special callsign such as this unless you are authorized to do so.