

# Ask the CFI

## ***When ATC says you are “cleared for the option” what are your options?***

“Cleared for the option” is a common phrase used at tower-controlled airports and an option approach permits the pilot to do any of the following; a full stop landing, a touch-and-go, a stop-and-go, a low approach or a missed approach. Here is what they all mean.

A **full stop landing** means that you intend to land and exit the runway. You may want to taxi back for another take off or you might be taxiing to an FBO or a hangar.

A **touch-and-go** is a landing followed by an immediate takeoff without stopping or exiting the runway. You will be expected to touch down only briefly without slowing down and configure for takeoff on the go.

A **stop-and-go** is a landing which comes to a full stop on the runway and once you have configured your airplane for takeoff you can start your take off from where you stopped. The point of the stop and go is not to rush the procedures needed for takeoff and is appropriate for complex aircraft when you need a few extra seconds to reconfigure. It is also useful for night currency landings when you must come to a full stop but you don’t want to waste time taxiing back to the beginning of the runway. This takes a little bit more time on the runway but is often safer and more efficient, assuming there is sufficient runway length.

A **low approach** would be a deliberately planned go around maneuver when you don’t intend to actually touch down on the runway.

A **missed approach** is a procedure used by instrument pilots when an approach cannot be completed to a full stop landing or during training when the pilot deliberately plans to fly the missed approach procedure. If you plan to fly the missed approach procedure you should let ATC know your intentions after passing the final approach fix (FAF) inbound at the latest. After reaching the decision height (for a precision approach) or the missed approach point (for a non-precision approach) and you have initiated the missed approach procedure or alternative ATC instructions, you should let ATC know as soon as practical.

Whichever option you choose, let ATC know as soon as you can what you plan to do so they can plan for other traffic accordingly. It’s worth noting that if any approach to land isn’t working out perfectly you can and should make the decision to go-around at any point in the pattern. Just tell the controller you are going around and what you’d like to do next.

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