BVA Airspace Briefing Guide

This guide provides pilots flying in Boston Virtual ARTCC airspace on VATSIM with recommended practices to make their simulated flight experience as realistic as possible.

Last Updated: **September 12, 2025**

Screenshot: Sean D.

About Boston Virtual ARTCC (BVA)

BVA is a community within VATSIM's global network of pilots and controllers.
We provide air traffic control within the Boston ARTCC on VATSIM.

We also encourage VATSIM pilots to become members. You'll get access to simulation resources, optional training programs, and one of the most active and realistic aviation communities—all 100% free.

For more information about BVA, visit bvartcc.com.

This information is for **online, enthusiast flight simulation use only** and cannot be used for real-world aviation.

When will ATC be available?

Check out the [Expected ATC Coverage] on the left side of our homepage.
We see the most activities during weekday evenings (U.S. Eastern Time)
and throughout the day on weekends

Screenshot: Braden K.

Screenshot: Braden K.

General Recommendations

Helpful information for all VATSIM pilots.

During a frequency change, you'll hear controllers say "monitor" or "contact"…

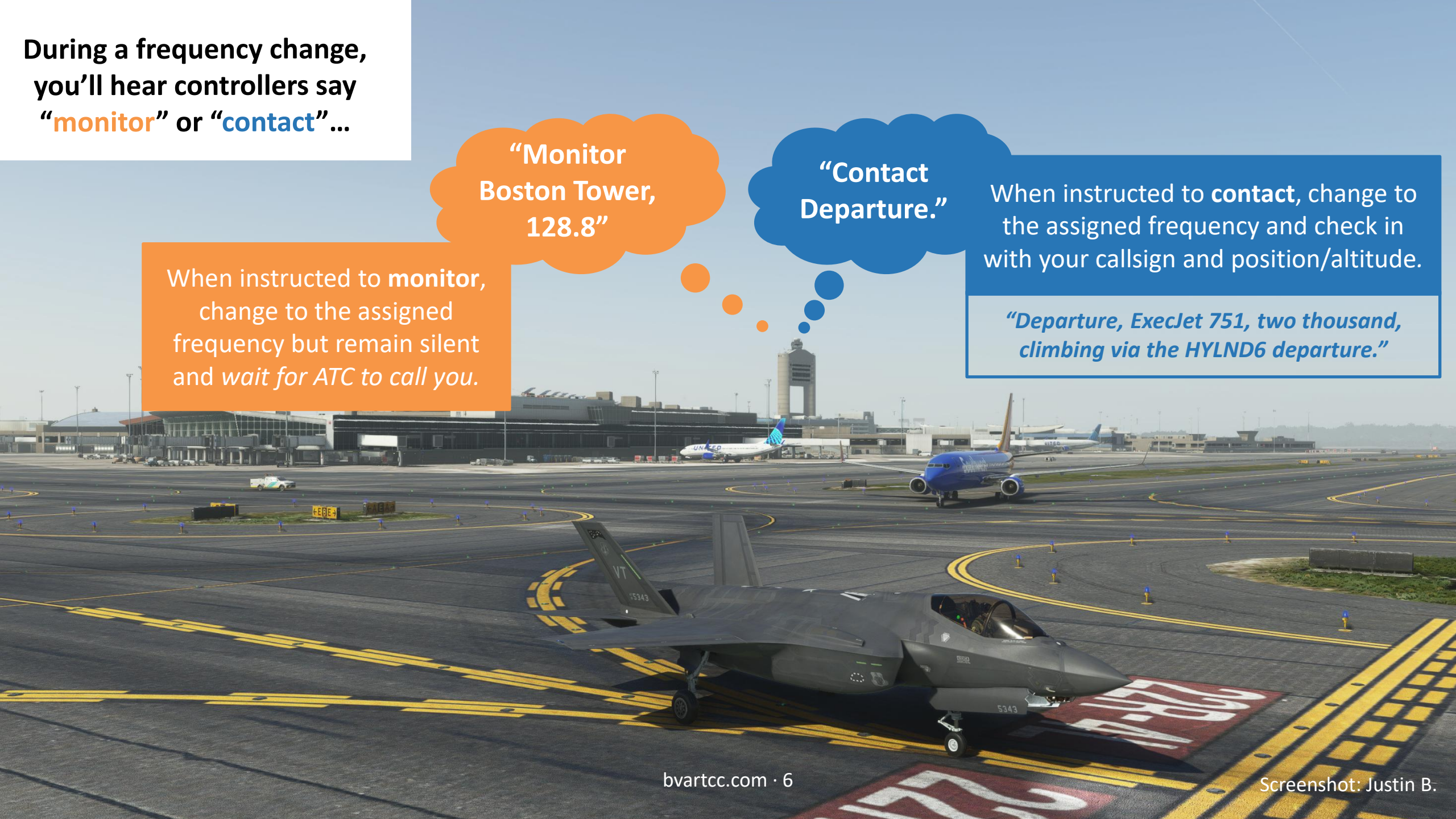
"Monitor Boston Tower, 128.8"

When instructed to **monitor**, change to the assigned frequency but remain silent and *wait for ATC to call you.*

"Contact Departure."

When instructed to **contact**, change to the assigned frequency and check in with your callsign and position/altitude.

"Departure, ExecJet 751, two thousand, climbing via the HYLND6 departure."



Screenshot: Justin B.

Screenshot: George T.

Only accept *what you can perform*

^and your airplane

If you are assigned a STAR, procedure, or clearance that you don't understand or don't know you can do…speak up!

It is much easier for the controllers to give alternate instructions before a mistake is made. We would rather provide headings and altitudes than have a pilot turn into oncoming traffic.

Unsure?

Ask ATC for clarification!

Across the United States, the transition altitude is 18,000’.

Below this, use the local altimeter setting, and refer to altitudes in thousands of feet (e.g., “one five thousand”). The first “flight level” is FL180.

Screenshot: George T.

Control your speed.

The maximum speed below 10,000’ is 250 knots.

Any ATC-assigned speed above 250 knots must be reduced to 250 knots as you descend below 10,000’.

Screenshot: Cameron H.

Have up-to-date navdata, if you can.
Controllers expect you to have the latest capability. Learn more.

Screenshot: Austin C.

In the United States (and Canada), do not report “established on the localizer”.
We know, it’s common practice in other parts of the world…but not a procedure here.

If you haven’t been switched to Tower by 5 miles from the runway, ask for a frequency change.
Or, if it’s too busy, just switch to the appropriate Tower frequency and request landing clearance.

Screenshot: Sean S.

We can only count to five…and even that's a stretch sometimes.

In the United States, we issue five-digit frequencies.

That means we'll say "124.52" instead of "124.525".

If your aircraft is set up for six-digit frequencies, you may need to add a "5" at the end of the frequency you are instructed to contact.

Screenshot: Matthew M.

Other Recommendations

- **Have appropriate charts** and know how to use them. **More on Charts**.
- **Don’t pause or leave** without permission. Ask on voice (or, if impossible, by frequency text) rather than private message.
- **Keep your sim at a 1x rate**, unless ATC has given you permission to time accelerate.
- **Know who to call.** We provide ‘top-down’ coverage: if a position is unstaffed, call the next ‘higher’ position. **More on Who to Contact**.
  - Opening hours are *not* simulated; if a controller is online, an underlying facility is open.
  - **Entering from UNICOM airspace:** call us 20-50 miles *prior* to reaching online airspace.
- **Check out our Pilot References** for preferred routes, flight planning tips, and more.

Screenshot: Michael S.


You may hear our members completing WINGS flights.
Wings Over New England is our free, voluntary training program. Through a series of challenge flights, WINGS helps teach safe and efficient aircraft operation within the air traffic control system.
To participate, become a BVA member…it's free!
Wings
Screenshot: Corey L.

Scenery Recommendations

Controllers issue instructions based on current charts, so it's important your simulator's scenery database matches current charts**.**

Please download updated KBOS scenery using the links on the next page.
Recommendations for other BVA airports are provided on subsequent pages.

Click any of the images and download up-to-date KBOS scenery for your sim.

MSFS
Freeware

MSFS, P3D
Payware

X-Plane
Freeware

P3D or FSX
Freeware

Other Airport Scenery Recommendations

For *X-Plane, FSX, and P3D*.

Broken link? Have your own recommendations to add?
Let us know!

X-Plane Towered Airports:

Code	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
KACK	Nantucket Memorial	Payware
KALB	Albany	Freeware
KBDL	Bradley	Freeware
KBGR	Bangor	Freeware
KBTV	Patrick Leahy Burlington	Freeware
KPVD	Rhode Island TF Green	Freeware | Payware
KPWM	Portland	Freeware | Payware
KSYR	Syracuse Hancock	Freeware | Payware

X-Plane Untowered Airports:

Code	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
6B6	Minute Man Air Field	Payware
KBHB	Hancock County / Bar Harbor	Payware
2B2	Plum Island	Payware

Looking for more X-Plane Scenery? Through the X-Plane Scenery Gateway, X-Plane pilots get user-generated scenery incorporated into sim updates, alleviating the need for as many downloads.

FSX and P3D pilots, search for freeware scenery options on AVSIM's file library.

Screenshot: Corey F.

Other Airport Scenery Recommendations

For *Microsoft Flight Simulator*.

Broken link? Have your own recommendations to add?
Let us know!

Large Airports:

Code	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
KALB	Albany	Freeware
KBDL	Bradley	Freeware | Payware
KBGR	Bangor	Freeware
KBTV	Patrick Leahy Burlington	Freeware
KMHT	Manchester Boston Regional	Payware
KPVD	Rhode Island TF Green	Payware
KPWM	Portland	Freeware | Payware
KSYR	Syracuse Hancock	Payware

Featured Wings Over New England Airports:

Code	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
KACK	Nantucket Memorial	Freeware
KASH	Boire Field	Freeware
KAUG	Augusta State Airport	Freeware
KBED	Laurence G Hanscom Field	Freeware
KEEN	Dillant/Hopkins	Freeware
KEWB	New Beford Regional	Freeware
KHFD	Hartford-Brainard	Freeware
KMVL	Morrisville-Stowe State	Freeware

MSFS pilots may wish to consider JustFlight's Real Taxiways add-on, which corrects taxiway signage and placement for thousands of airports with a single purchase.

Screenshot: Brennan L.

Other Airport Scenery Recommendations

For *Microsoft Flight Simulator*.

Broken link? Have your own recommendations to add?
Let us know!

Local Airports:

Code	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
1B5	Franconia	Freeware
6B6	Minute Man	Freeware
KBAF	Westfield-Barnes Regional	Freeware
KBDL	Bradley	Freeware | Payware
KCEF	Westover ARB/Metropolitan	Freeware
KCON	Concord Municipal	Freeware
KCQX	Chatham Municipal	Freeware

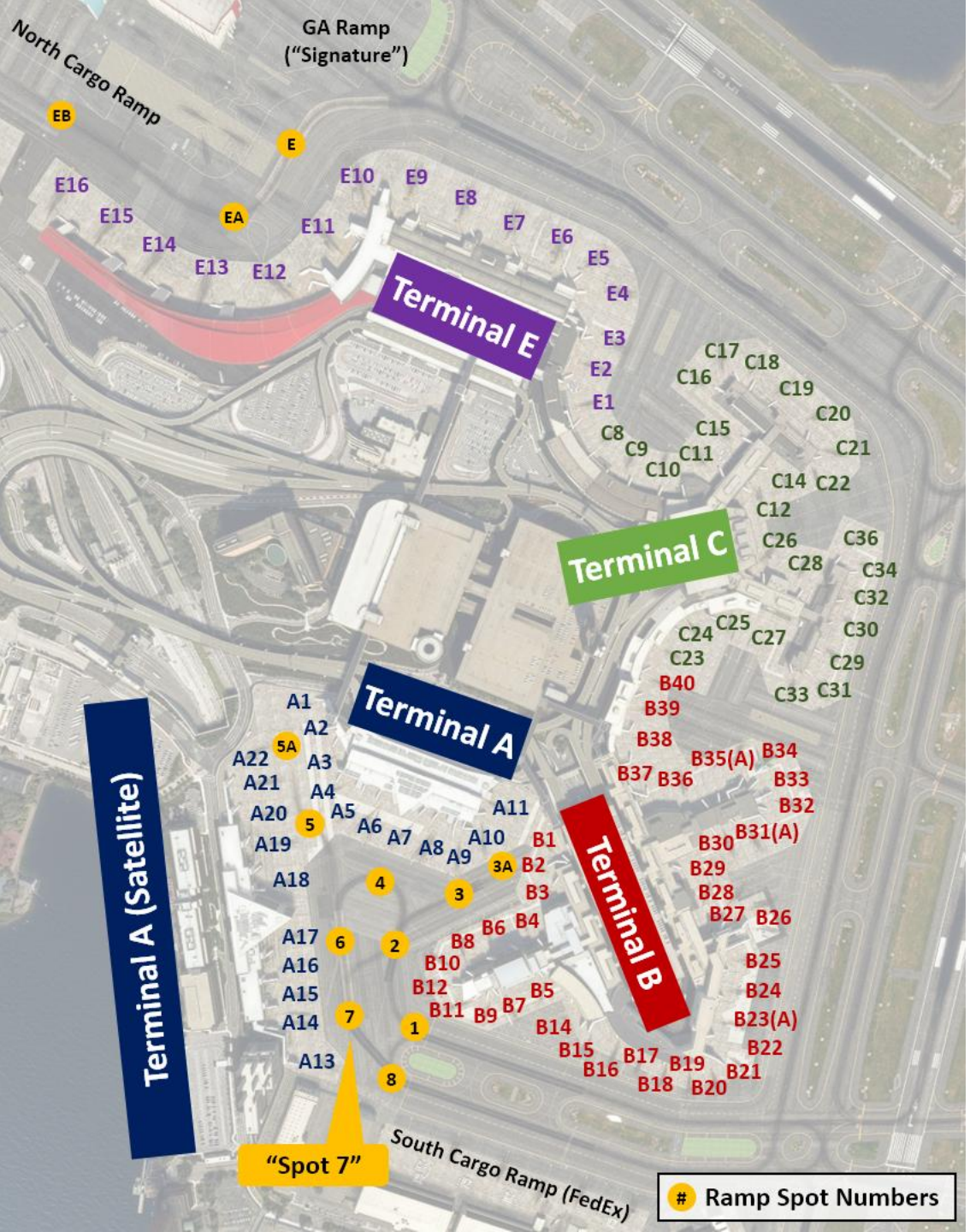
Local Airports:

	Airport Name	Scenery Download(s)
KHYA	Cape Cod Gateway	Freeware
KIJD	Windham	Freeware
KMVY	Martha's Vineyard	Freeware | Payware
KORH	Worcester Regional	Payware
KOWD	Norwood Memorial	Freeware
KPVC	Provincetown Municipal	Freeware
ZBW Helipads Megapack		Freeware

Screenshot: Brennan L.

Boston Logan Airport (KBOS) Operations

KBOS is the centerpiece of our airspace, so this guide spends a little more time discussing what you can expect when you “fly Logan”.



Terminal A

- Delta (A1-A22)

Terminal B

- Air Canada (B1-B3)
- Alaska (B35-B36)
- American (B4-B22)
- Boutique Air
- Southwest (B31A-B34)
- Spirit (B37-B40)
- United (B22-B31)

Terminal C

- Aer Lingus (C20)
- Cape Air (C27)
- Etihad (C17)
- JetBlue (C6-C36)
- TAP Air Portugal (C17-C20)

Terminal E

All International Arrivals, and departures from:

- AeroMexico
- Air France
- Allegiant Air
- Austrian
- Avianca Airlines
- Azores Airlines
- Bermudair
- British Airways
- Cathay Pacific
- Condor
- Copa Airlines
- El Al
- Emirates
- Frontier
- Hainan Airlines
- Hawaiian Airlines
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- ITA
- Japan Airlines
- KLM
- Korean Air
- LATAM
- Level
- Lufthansa
- PLAY
- Porter
- Qatar Airways
- Scandinavian
- Sun Country
- Swiss
- Turkish Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic
- WestJet

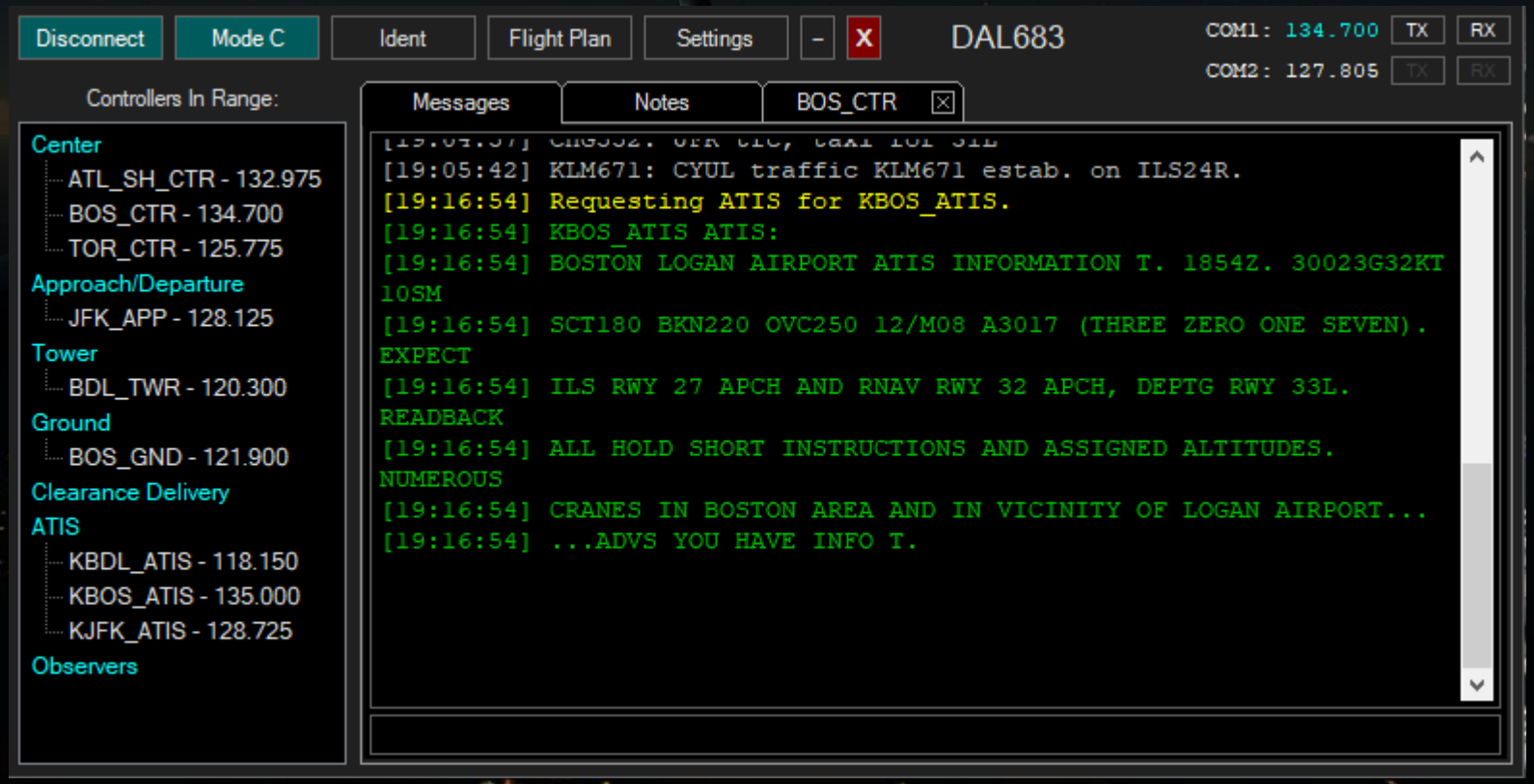
Commonly used gates shown in parentheses

Departing from KBOS

Screenshot: Francesco D.

Type “**.atis KBOS**” in your pilot client for runway information and important notes.

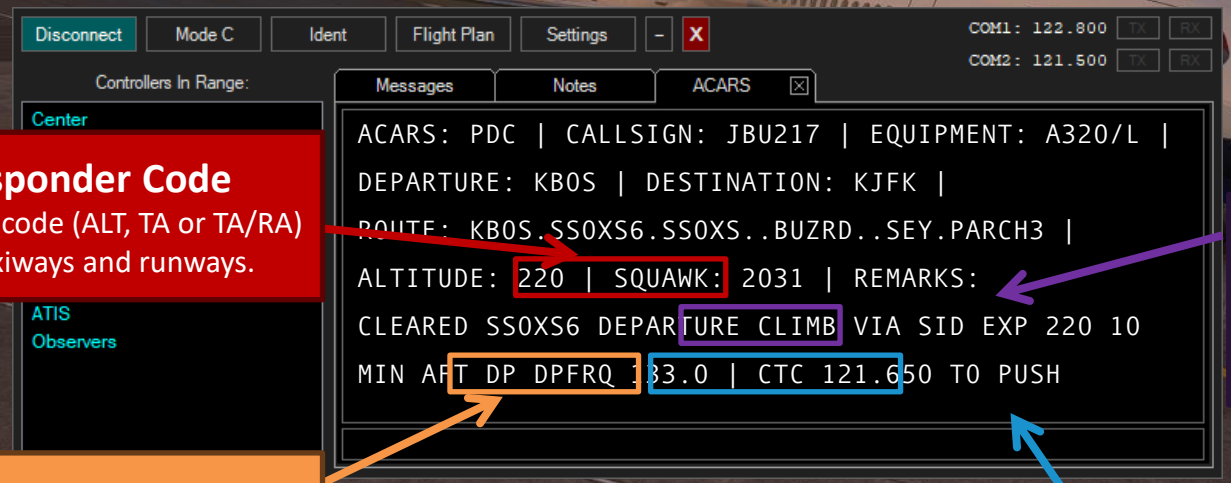
Use **the ATIS** to plan your arrival and departure runways.



Screenshot: Brennan L.

You may receive a textual clearance or PDC from "ACARS".
This is your IFR clearance and no readback is required.

- When ready to push or taxi, contact the frequency shown.
- On initial contact, state the current ATIS letter and your location.



Transponder Code
Squawk this code (ALT, TA or TA/RA) on all taxiways and runways.

Altitude Information
"Climb via SID" means to level off at the "top altitude" found on the cleared SID.

Departure Frequency
When instructed by Tower, change to this frequency.

Contact this frequency when ready to push/taxi.
Example: "*Boston Clearance, JBU217, Gate C24, information K, push*"

Screenshot: Cameron P.

Flying a SID (departure) in the United States:

- The “top altitude” for IFR jet departures is 5,000’ at KBOS.
- Instructed to “climb via SID” in your clearance/PDC?
  Level off at 5,000’ until cleared higher.
- On an RNAV SID, ensure the first waypoint in your navigation system matches the chart.
- Charted speeds are mandatory unless canceled.
- Too high? Too low? Can’t find the chart or missing a waypoint? **Advise ATC!**

Screenshot: Steve P.

Arriving at KBOS

Based on the ATIS, make an **educated guess** about the arrival runway and **set up for that. You should be set up for the approach *before you start descending*.**

- In the U.S., no further clearance is required to fly a STAR: if it's in your flight plan, you're cleared to fly it…and it should be loaded into your FMS.
- You must receive descent instructions prior to leaving an assigned altitude.
- Set up frequencies, speeds, charts for the approach *you expect*.
- An approach assignment will be issued about 40 flying miles from the runway.

Program & Prep → **Arrival** → **Approach** → **After Landing**

Screenshot: George T.

Flying a STAR (arrival) in the United States:

- Do **not** leave your last ATC-assigned altitude until you receive a descent clearance.
- Charted speeds are mandatory unless canceled.
- Too high? Too low? Can't find the chart or missing a waypoint? **Advise ATC!**

Program & Prep → **Arrival** → Approach → After Landing

Screenshot: Stipan R.

Flying a STAR (arrival) in the United States:
Descent Instructions

How you descend depends on the instruction you're given:

Instruction	Meaning
"Descend and maintain 5,000."	Descend to 5,000' immediately. Published altitudes on the STAR do not apply.
"Cross OOSHN at and maintain 9,000."	You are authorized to descend to 9,000'. You may start the descent at your discretion, provided you are level at 9,000' by OOSHN. The published altitudes on the STAR do not apply.
"Descend via the OOSHN5 arrival, Runway 22L"	Start descent at your discretion, flying the lateral and vertical portions of the OOSHN5 arrival, Runway 22L transition. You must meet all published altitude restrictions.

Published speed restrictions are *always* mandatory unless canceled by ATC.

Screenshot: Francesco D.

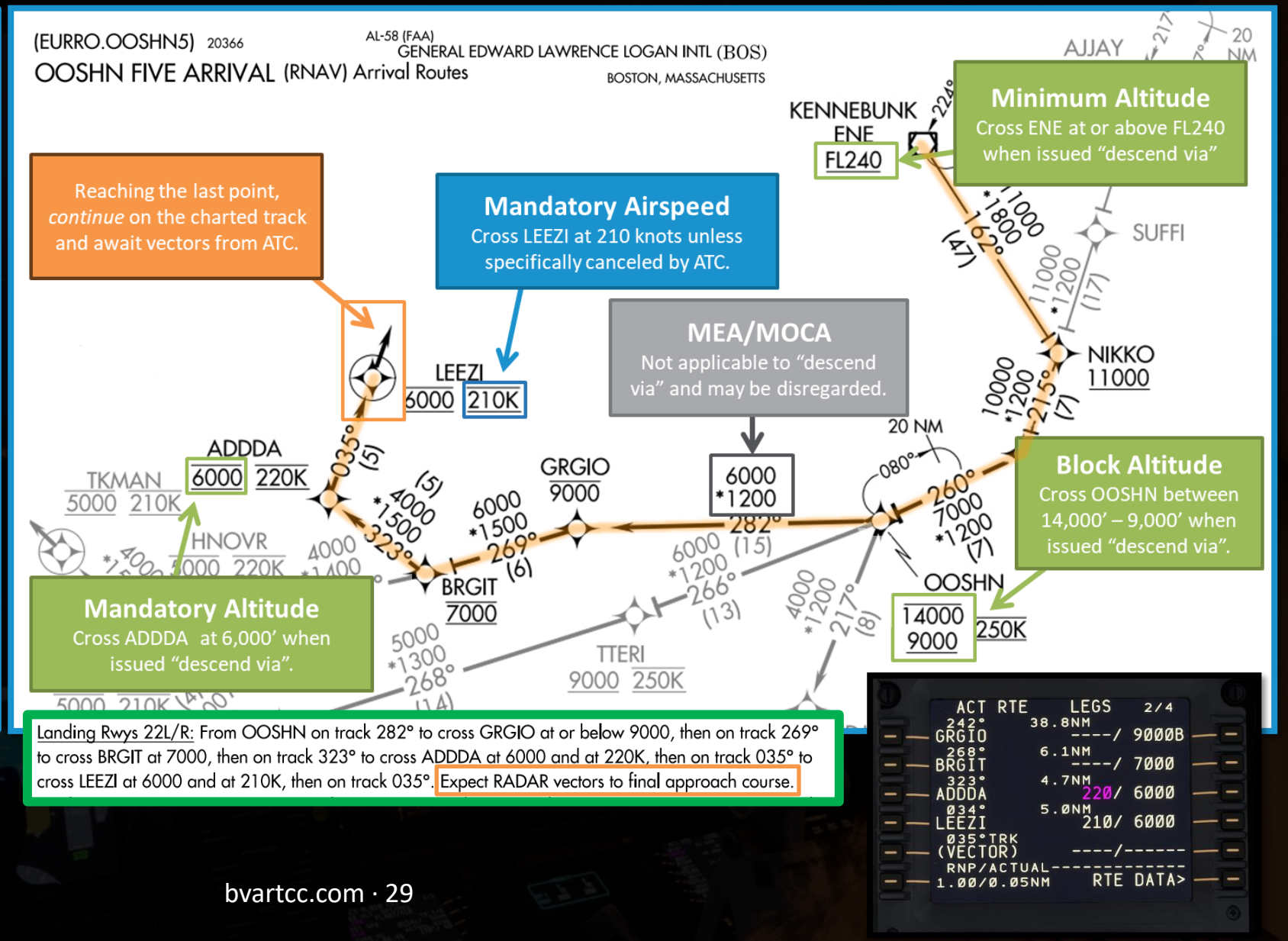
Flying a STAR (arrival) in the United States:

When cleared to "descend via…"

1. **Review the assigned runway transition**
   Ensure waypoints, speeds, and altitudes on the chart ***exactly*** match your FMS.
   In this example, we're on the OOSHN5 arrival, landing Runway 22L.

2. **Descend when you're ready but meet all published altitudes and speeds.**
   Too high? Too low? Wrong waypoints? Ask ATC for a vector.

3. **Continue flying the STAR until given additional instructions.**
   Normally, you'll "end" with a route discontinuity on a downwind heading—and that's a good thing! Vectors to the final approach course will be provided by ATC.

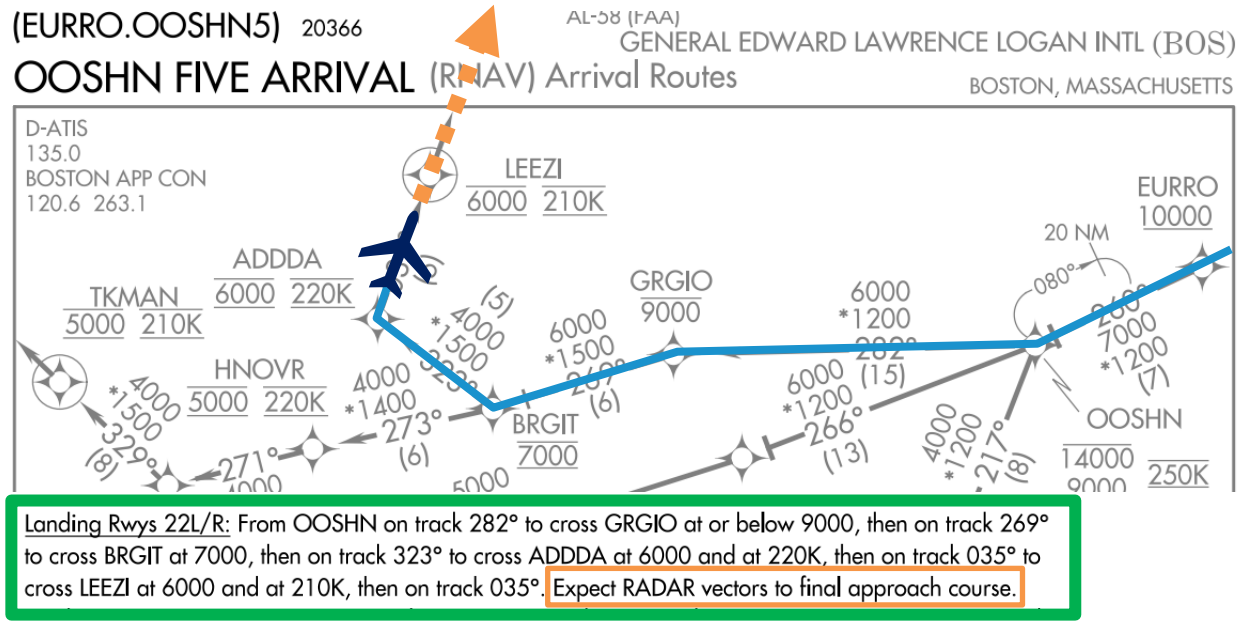


Screenshot: Braden K.

Flying a STAR (arrival) in the United States:
Vectors to Final

Many of our arrivals end with a "discontinuity" or "vector" on a downwind heading.

As in the OOSHN5 example below, the phrase *"expect RADAR vectors to final approach course"* means that you ***continue on the existing track***, flying away from the airport, after crossing the last waypoint on the arrival. Air traffic control will then issue headings and altitudes for you to join the final approach course.



Never make a turn off the STAR/arrival route without a vector from air traffic control.

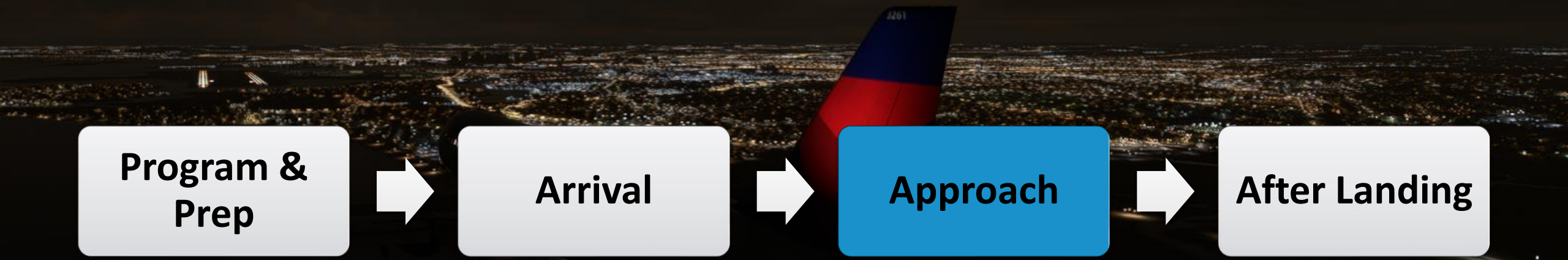
Screenshot: Noah H.

When you first check in with Boston Approach, include the following information:

Who You're Calling | Who You Are | Your Current Altitude

Boston Approach, Delta 261 Heavy, one-four thousand, descending via the OOSHN5 arrival, Runway 22L, information Kilo.

Cleared Altitude or "Descending Via" Runway Transition | Current ATIS

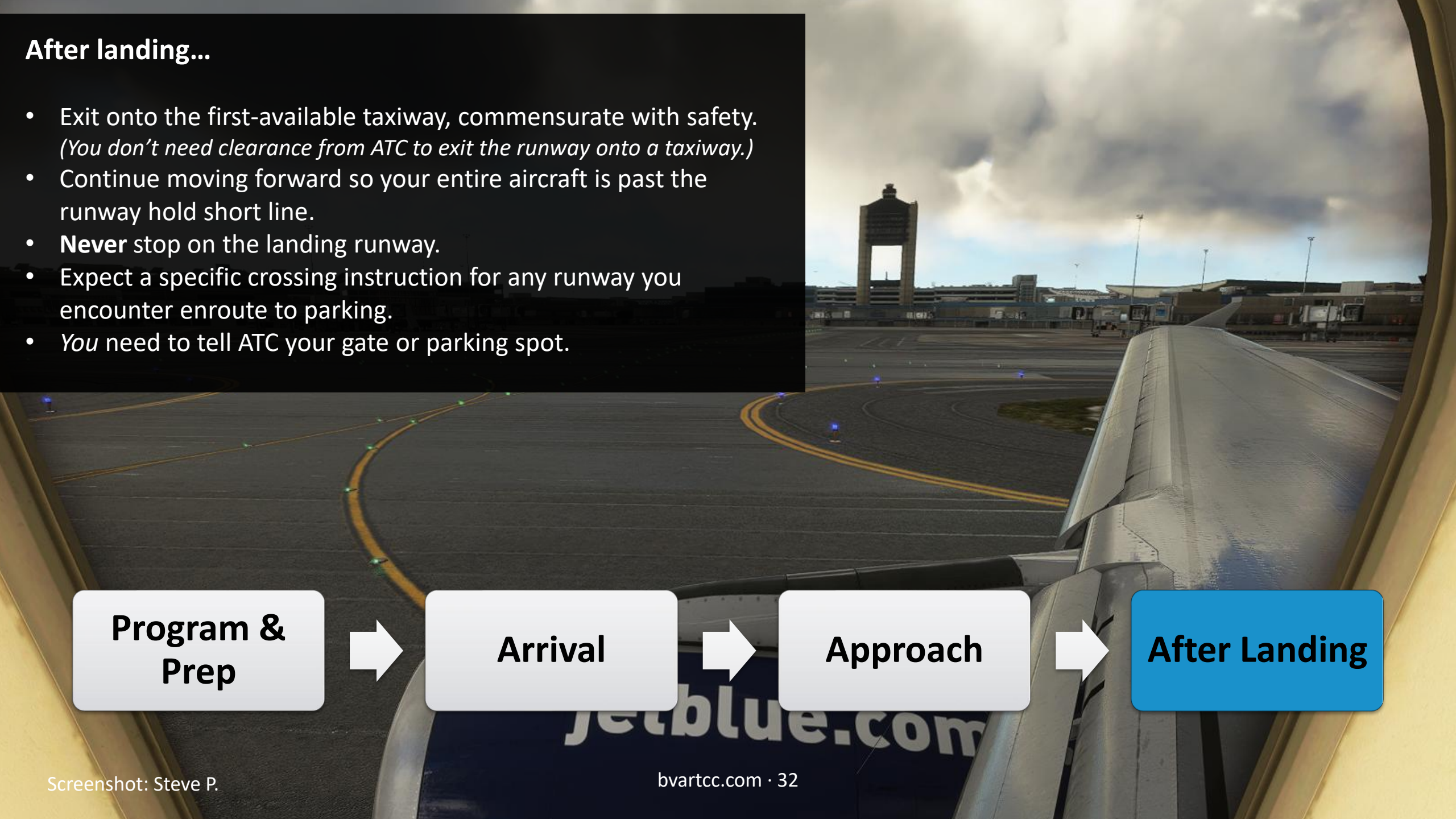


Program & Prep → **Arrival** → **Approach** → **After Landing**

Screenshot: David R.

After landing…

- Exit onto the first-available taxiway, commensurate with safety. *(You don't need clearance from ATC to exit the runway onto a taxiway.)*
- Continue moving forward so your entire aircraft is past the runway hold short line.
- **Never** stop on the landing runway.
- Expect a specific crossing instruction for any runway you encounter enroute to parking.
- *You* need to tell ATC your gate or parking spot.



Program & Prep → Arrival → Approach → **After Landing**

Screenshot: Steve P.

A quick summary…

The checklist to the right offers a summary of best practices for flying in BVA airspace on VATSIM, from pilots and controllers.

When flying in our airspace, please keep these important points in mind.

Boston Virtual ARTCC

- ☑ **Download scenery for KBOS and the other airports you'll fly to.**
  Use our recommendations or search freeware on AVSIM (FSX/P3D), FlightSim.to (MSFS), or X-Plane.org (X-Plane).
- ☑ **Have appropriate charts for your flight.**
  …and know how to read/interpret them.
- ☑ **Keep your GPS/navdata up-to-date.**
  You can find free and payware navdata options on our website.
- ☑ **File a preferred route.**
  But know that ATC may still change this for traffic, weather, or other reasons.
- ☑ **Ask questions if you're unsure.**
  Requesting help and getting headings and altitudes is much better than guessing what to do.
- ☑ **Use voice, whenever you can, to communicate with ATC.**
  We love voice pilots and would prefer to work with you on voice rather than text, even if it means slowing down or simplifying instructions.

The controllers of Boston Virtual ARTCC thank you for flying with us.

We hope you enjoy your experience and hope to see you in our airspace again soon.
We love feedback! Please tell us about positive experiences or anything you'd like us to improve.
Submit feedback at bvartcc.com/feedback.

Screenshot: Braden K.