

Microsoft Flight Simulator

Marketed as the "The World's Most Popular Flight Adventure", Flight Simulator ver. 4.0 claims to work on any 1 meg. Mac from the Plus on up (2 MB with System 7).

When starting Flight Simulator, the plane is in the takeoff position. Pressing keypad 3 opens the throttle and soon the plane is airborne. Now you can fly to another airport or "slew" to such far away destinations as San Francisco, LA, or New York City.

I seemed prone to crashes soon after takeoff. ("How strange," I thought, "considering I've watched both *Top Gun* and the Time/ Life flying videos.") After a few ill fated trips, I sat down to skim over some instructions. The guidebook is well written. At times it got a little deep, but the end result - flying without crashing - helped make me feel better about the several hours spent reading the instructions. They cover everything from beginner flight lessons to designing your own sailplane, prop-plane, or jet. (Figure 1 shows a MIG 29 jet that someone created & I downloaded.)

Once you can take off & fly level, you come to appreciate the amount of realism and control that was put into the program. You can set the reliability of your plane - that is, how often you will have engine failure, burnt out light bulbs, navigational problems, etc. The scenery - trees, buildings, other planes - contained in the program is impressive. For all of us "compact Mac" users, there is a preference that controls how complex the scenery gets. (Figure 2) The assortment of planes range from a Sopwith Camel (Fig 3), to experimental jets, and sailplanes (Fig 4). You can control the weather - clouds, wind, storms; time of day - dawn, day, dusk, night, and the seasons of the year.

A great plus is that no matter where you are, there are at least 4 different ways of viewing yourself and your surroundings; 1) from the tower, 2) from the ground, 3) from the cockpit, or 4) from a spot plane. You can determine where the spot plane is through the "Set Spot Plane" menu command. Select the "Show View Tools" from the View menu. This presents you with a palette, (Figure 5). From this palette, you can decide which view you want .

Learning to land is the only really hard part! Getting the heading and right glide slope takes some practice. However, Flight Simulator provides an instrument that lets you "see" your correct glide slope as rectangles, telephone poles, or as a "yellow brick road." Alignment with these markers is the key to a smooth arrival.

I wouldn't recommend Flight Simulator for those with only a 9" screen. Flying scenery and details are obscured because the bottom half of the screen is covered by the instrument panel. You can barely see enough screen to fly properly.

The biggest drawback I found with Flight Simulator for the Mac is that it, unlike its MS-DOS counterpart, doesn't allow you to fly with others via a modem or network link. At our October AMUG meeting, a Microsoft representative stated that flying this way **was** supported in Flight Simulator for the Mac. However, as of this writing, I haven't found any reference to this in the manual, or any menu commands to accomplish this.

Another feature grossly lacking (but present in the MS-DOS version) is the ability to function as the Air Traffic Coordinator from the tower. This would allow you to direct incoming, computer piloted planes.

In short, I like Flight Simulator, but think that Microsoft should put as much effort into the Mac versions of this product as they do in the DOS or Windows versions.

Because of the learning curve & the lack of network flying, I give Flight Simulator 3 1/2 mice out of 5.