

Saturday, May 9, 2026

Steep Approach

Purpose and Objective

A steep approach enables a pilot to maneuver the helicopter from altitude to a hover when a normal approach angle is not feasible. The principle “**As steep as necessary, as normal as possible**” should be followed by the pilot when executing the maneuver to ensure a safe descent.

Maneuver

1. Identify a reference mark for the approach. This should be slightly below your normal approach reference mark.
 2. Once the landing site is intercepted with what you identify as a steep approach angle, begin a slight descent by lowering the collective.
 3. You should maintain the landing spot within the reference mark, keeping a constant “brisk walking pace” all the way to the landing spot.
 4. If the approach is within steep approach standards, lower carb heat on final no less than 200 feet AGL and 30 KTS.
 5. Continuously evaluate the landing spot on the approach. Are there obstacles you did not see that could pose a problem?
 6. As the helicopter decreases in airspeed, slowly and steady raise collective to maintain the approach angle. Pace is maintained with an appropriate pitch attitude throughout the approach. Avoid rapid decelerations.
 7. As ETL is felt, maintain the vibrations throughout the approach, all the way to a hover.
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Common Errors

- Pilot does not identify the appropriate pace or tries to rapidly decelerate airspeed.
- Loss of ETL before aircraft is in in-ground effect.
- Not identifying when to terminate the maneuver and initiate a go-around.
- Sinking towards the landing site due to insufficient support with the collective.



Performance Standards

Private Pilot for Rotorcraft Category Helicopter Rating ACS, Area of Operation V, Task D.

Highlights

- Establish and maintain a steep approach angle (15° maximum) and proper rate of closure.
- Consider the wind direction and conditions, landing surface, and obstacles.
- Arrive at the termination point, on the surface or at a stabilized hover, ± 4 feet.

