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# Aeronautical Information Manual

Official Guide to  
Basic Flight Information and ATC Procedures

## Table of Contents

**Explanation of Changes -  
Basic**

Explanation of Changes

**Preface**Subscription Information, Comments/Corrections  
Form, Publication Schedule, General Information**Chapter 1**

Air Navigation

**Chapter 2**

Aeronautical Lighting and Other Airport Visual Aids

**Chapter 3**

Airspace

**Chapter 4**

Air Traffic Control

**Chapter 5**

Air Traffic Procedures

**Chapter 6**

Emergency Procedures

**Chapter 7**

Safety of Flight

**Chapter 8**

Medical Facts for Pilots

**Chapter 9**

Aeronautical Charts and Related Publications

**Chapter 10**

Helicopter Operations

**Appendices**Bird/Other Wildlife Strike Report,  
Volcanic Activity Reporting Form (VAR),  
Laser Beam Exposure Questionnaire,  
Abbreviations/Acronyms

<a href="#">Return to Air Traffic Publications Library</a>	<a href="#">Return to AIM Home Page</a>	<a href="#">Return to Table of Contents</a>	<a href="#">Return to Pilot/Controller Glossary</a>	<a href="#">Return to Index</a>
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#### **4-4-14. Visual Separation**

**a.** Visual separation is a means employed by ATC to separate aircraft in terminal areas and en route airspace in the NAS. There are two methods employed to effect this separation:

- 1.** The tower controller sees the aircraft involved and issues instructions, as necessary, to ensure that the aircraft avoid each other.
- 2.** A pilot sees the other aircraft involved and upon instructions from the controller provides separation by maneuvering the aircraft to avoid it. When pilots accept responsibility to maintain visual separation, they must maintain constant visual surveillance and not pass the other aircraft until it is no longer a factor.

**NOTE-**

*Traffic is no longer a factor when during approach phase the other aircraft is in the landing phase of flight or executes a missed approach; and during departure or en route, when the other aircraft turns away or is on a diverging course.*

**b.** A pilot's acceptance of instructions to follow another aircraft or provide visual separation from it is an acknowledgment that the pilot will maneuver the aircraft as necessary to avoid the other aircraft or to maintain in-trail separation. In operations conducted behind heavy jet aircraft, it is also an acknowledgment that the pilot accepts the responsibility for wake turbulence separation.