

AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

1958 Cessna 172

(FS9 Version)



Product Information

Publishers: [SimFlight3D](#)

Description: GA aircraft.

Download Size:
118 MB

Format:
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Simulation Type:
FS9

Reviewed by: [Chris Kiehl](#) AVSIM Contributing Reviewer - August 18, 2009

Introduction

The Cessna 172 is one of the most widely produced airframes, and one of the most popular training aircraft on Earth. More than 40,000 airframes have been built to date. To a warbird fan like myself, it might seem a bit hard to see at first but ask anyone who owns one or has trained in one with great success and they'll tell you why this aircraft is so popular. It's an incredibly stable and forgiving training aircraft, with just the right amount of kick to make decent GA pilots.

However, as I said I'm a warbird fan; I was never into Cessna high wings. The man I got the aviation influence from, my father, never really liked them, either. Then again, with time I grew to like these seemingly simple planes. When I saw the older version of the 172, the 1958 "Fastback", I really wanted the chance to fly the grandparent of the modern, highly successful trainer.

Developed in 1955 from the highly successful Cessna 170 airframe, the 172 was to introduce the common American to the seemingly more complex aviation world. This was the era in aviation when the attitude of, "If you can drive a car, you can fly an airplane" became the selling point.

The airplane proved so successful that it was in solid production from 1956 to 1986, then it halted for 10 years and was re-introduced as the 172R Skyhawk in 1996. So, for a plane that has been produced, used and was proven for such a great length of time, it is interesting and great to see the very beginning of a small but legendary aircraft. The "Fastback" or "Straight-tail" 172 is something FS had been missing for quite some time, and it doesn't matter which of those nicknames you use, we finally have ourselves a nice little rendition of it.

Let's take a closer look at her.

Installation:

This is relatively simple. Simply unzip and copy the folders to their appropriate destinations. Contents of the aircraft folder go to FS9's aircraft folder, and so on. That's it.

Documentation:

A very well done portion of this package would be its documentation. The readme and information sheets and checklists are very nicely and simply presented. You'll find a neat one page reference with all the V speeds, which I really like to see, included. We also have a very succinct but detailed readme, which should answer most of your questions.



2D Panel:

Here, we have a simple, yet nicely done 2D panel. It's an IFR 'tall' panel, which is what you get with the usual default 172 types. You do get a nice photo real representation of the panel itself, with a lot of functional buttons and switches.

Sub-panels on the FS9 version are limited simply to a default GPS unit. As I don't ever use any 2D parts of any aircraft, I'll end this portion here.



Not much going on here, except what I call a nice 2D main panel

Virtual Cockpit:

This is the area that is subject to my highest scrutiny. However, this plane does nicely here, and even though it may not be a precision glass cockpit or have tons of little details, I think you're going to like it.



Here's a 360 of the interior and what you'll get

One would expect a somewhat basic and modern Cessna panel, but we are looking at the grandparent of the modern 172's we're all acquainted with. This panel will be very different to you if you're used to the modern Cessna in either the sim or real life. It's not as cramped, and definitely looks like the much older panel of the Cessna 120 I learned to fly in.

Let's get down to brass tacks. The level of detail in the VC was more than adequate for me, along with functionality. If this is this designer's first aircraft, his product will only get better and better.



Most of the useful gauges are more than legible, even back at .50 zoom. I fly it from .70 zoom, where I can still easily read every gauge I need. The only gauges I have any trouble reading are the engine oil temperature and pressure gauges, which are far off on the right side of the panel.

Night lighting comes in the form of a red dome light, without gauge backlights. This red dome, or flood light, is visible even if you like to use VC Lighting during the day, like I do. You always get a strong red hue, and obviously more so at night.



Here's the flood light, which is even a bit more red at night

The lines are quite clean, and most of the textures are crisp. There is a bit of room for improvement here, but it's great for a first simulator plane created. This plane reminds me of Carenado's quality from just a couple years ago, and that was great even then.



A bit more interior for you to see, the floor and roof. The sun visors are not animated--I don't mind that kind of thing not being included

Again, most of what I need during routine flights are clickable; things like engine management levers, switches, and flap levers. However, the fuel selector gauge does not seem to function, nor can I even find a parking brake lever. The latter doesn't matter as much to me, but what does matter is when I can't choose which fuel tank to burn a bit more from than the other, as I can't quite balance my plane the way I want.

The radio and transponder are both the default stacks, and don't have a lot of looks going for them. However, I don't mind the default radio because it's almost always completely clickable and functional. Also, the default Cessna gauges are used for almost the entire panel.

A couple of little extras included here will probably make you happy, including a click spot on the passenger seat in the form of a map. It will bring up the... you guessed it, the simulator map screen. The other little extra is one I never really cared for due to the lack of functionality and frame rate issue, but those issues aren't present with this one. The GPS mounted in the top center of the panel has actually been useful for me, even though it's a little hard to see at a distance.

Bottom line, I don't think this VC will disappoint. If you're an early Cessna fan, or just really like the early 'Fastback' 172's, then you'll really love it.

External Model:

A very nice representation of the 1958 Cessna 172 'Fastback' is obviously what we want, and we definitely receive it. The lines are incredibly crisp and the detail is abundant. I don't see how this model can disappoint the Cessna fans, and it seems pretty bullet proof to the 'rivet-counters'.

The attention to small texture and modeling details shows that the developer actually worked closely with this Cessna, and I love when developers construct a ship they're close to for the sim. Small pitot and intake tubes, great weathering effects, or that straight-up tail that looks real; it just has tons of great detail.



This is one of the main reasons I wanted to review this Cessna, it's just easy on the eyes, in my opinion

Four paint schemes are included, one which represents the ship that the developer of this package actually flew. The colors themselves are unique for what I've seen slapped on a Cessna.



Here are the four included liveries you'll get. As I mentioned, some rather unique Cessna paint jobs for a rather unique Cessna

This ship has all the regular animations such as the control surfaces, doors and even the pilot window. However, there is a neat little extra included in the form of an opening cowl, and an oil dipstick that pops right out. Also, there seems to be a nice little 'jitter' on start-up, which is something every real plane does when you crank that cold engine. It would've been nice to see chocks and the pilot disappearing when the ship is shutdown with the brake on, but this is this developer's first plane.

I have noticed a flaw or two with the suspension modeling, aside from taxi behavior. When touching down or taking off, right near stall speed, the rear main gear seems to float off the runway by about 3-5 inches. I know some may not mind

something like that at all, but I really love to see the wheels glued to the runway (until right after rotation, of course) just as in real life.

In any case, fans of this specific Cessna model will simply love having a very nice rendition of this rare bird.

Flight Dynamics:

I always start this part of any review with the disclaimer: No, I haven't flown one of these. However, I'll also start by saying this Cessna 172 does really seem to adhere to the performance specs of the real plane, and it does seem to behave like the less complex Cessna type.

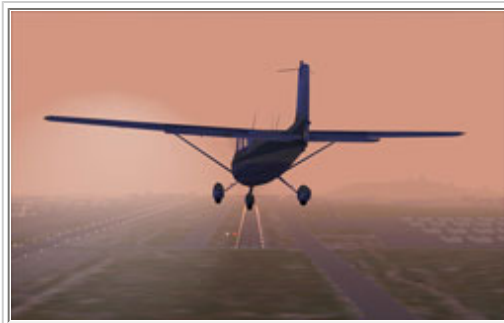


As I said, it does fly very closely to the specifications and as many 172 owners and pilots have said, cruise speed is a little optimistic in the book. This ship won't go too fast, but then again, it's a trainer not a touring aircraft. As for the simulation, there are a few minor issues here and we'll go into more detail.



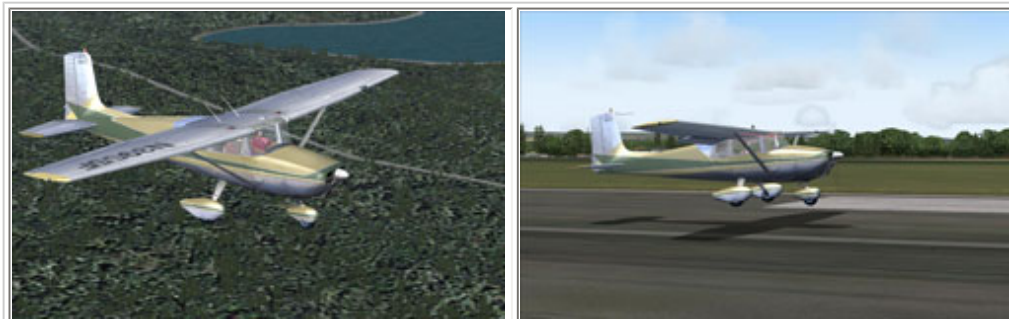
First off, all normal flight maneuvers are pretty seamless; s-turns, steep turns and crabbing are nicely represented. When you're up in the air and you get it trimmed nicely, it'll pretty much fly itself with only a bit of adjustment here and there. I did notice, and this is something I always look for and notice with sim-aircraft, is rudder power.

Too often, the rudder authority is very exaggerated. However, here it doesn't seem to be compared to the few real world aircraft I've flown. It doesn't take too much rudder to coordinate a turn, as it seems to coordinate itself. This Cessna, with most other Cessna's, has a relatively big rudder area which will only add yaw stability. Crosswinds are nicely handled, as you can see from the next review shot; 18 knot crosswind handled nicely.



All you need is a little rudder away from the crosswind, and a little aileron into it and you'll be fine

Taking off is pretty much what you'd expect if you've ever touched the default Cessna's or any other Cessna simulations. Landing follows this pattern as well, but the ground effect seems a little more realistic here than with other sim aircraft. I don't know if that is something that is encoded in the aircraft dynamics, but it seemed to gently touch down without ballooning back up into the air 5 feet before touchdown.



Pretty docile aircraft all around, as you won't find it too hard to handle

A few issues I did notice were stalls and the suspension of the landing gear. First off, stall performance is very rarely modeled accurately, so I typically consider this more of a sim limitation. When you keep pulling up after dropping power to stall, eventually you hear the horn go and the nose points up a little further. However, instead of breaking and dropping the nose back down, it tries to do a back flip, and things don't improve from there.

Then we have the suspension, and this is something I definitely can't be sure of. Maybe a 172 pilot will chime in after the review and enlighten me, but the suspension seemed too soft to be stable. You can very easily tip it onto two wheels if you give it a sharp turn with a little brake. As I said, I've never flown or even taxied a Cessna, so I'd love to hear if this is actually the way they are, or if the gear is a bit more stiff. The Cessna 120 tail dragger I flew was very stable, but it was a spring steel tail dragger.

Anyway, the major regimes of flight for this 172 are very well represented and I don't think Cessna fans will be disappointed. Just don't try a hammerhead in it.

Sounds:

This is part of the package that some may not like too much as there are no included sounds. The package uses default Cessna 172 sounds, which are quite boring. However, I went out and downloaded Turbine Sound Studios' great Cessna 172 package, and that breathes new life into the ship.

It's not quite right for the 1958 Cessna 172, which is why included sounds for this unique and earlier engined Cessna 172 would have been nice. Since there aren't any included sounds, I'll cut this area of the review short.

Performance:

Performance was exquisite on my end, with no noticeable stutters or drop from the default 172. The developer mentioned that he optimized everything as much as possible and that really does show here. The only tiny issue I get is after a decent while outside the virtual cockpit, is a texture reload upon re-entering the VC. Simply put, I don't think you will dislike how it performs on your computer.

On Final:

This package really held its own nicely, in my opinion. It does have some flaws, however, as nothing is ever perfect. For a first aircraft from this developer, it isn't bad at all.

I always wanted to do 3D modeling, and gave the Gmax tutorials good attempts. I wanted to create a couple personal favorites, and if I had been able to, I would've been proud of myself to produce something as nice as this Cessna Fastback. Not to mention that the FS world now has another unique and classic aircraft to add to the hangar.

Test System
Intel Core 2 Duo 4 GB DDR 667 Nvidia GeForce 8800 GT OC @ 1680x1050x32 FS9.1
Flying Time: 11 hours



What I Like About The 1958 Cessna 172

- Model
- Virtual Cockpit
- Performance
- Optimization

What I Don't Like About The 1958 Cessna 172

- Suspension is a bit too squishy for me, but for all I know this is the way Cessna's actually taxi
- No sounds included

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