Circling to Land Considerations

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* Circling minimums only are allowed for all approaches with a letter designation such as VOR-A. Only circling minimums are published if the final approach course is more than 30 degrees off the runway or the descent from the FAF to the runway surface is greater than 400 fpm. However, on a circling approach you can still land straight in if visibility requirements are met and normal maneuvers are used.

* Do not descend below circling minimums when circling until at least established on downwind.
* If you lose sight of the runway during the circle, climb back to the circling minimums if you are below them, then turn towards the airport, then conduct the missed approach procedure. The published missed approach is valid only when begun at the missed approach point at the MDA or higher.
* When conducting any straight in approach, if you decide to circle rather than land straight in, the circle cannot begin at any altitude below circling minimums. In other words, if you are already at the MAP or DA and below circling minimums, you will have to either land straight in or conduct the missed approach. If you are below circling minimums but can climb to circling minimums before the MAP, you may then circle.
* The MDA of a circling approach may only provide obstacle clearance of as little as 250' which is why you must be at least at circling minimums to circle.
* Check the approach chart to see if circling can only be in one direction. If so, this will be due to higher terrain in the other direction.
* One way to fly circling minimums is to fly the glideslope down to the published circling minimums. Another way is to fly the LOC to circling minimums and circle from there.
* On an ILS or localizer approach with no side step maneuver published, you may only descend to circling minimums if you want to circle to land on the parallel runway. E.g. ILS 28R but want to circle to land on 28L.
* If possible, the turns in a circling maneuver should be made in the direction that gives the pilot in command the best view of the runway during the turns.
* Never use a lower straight in minimum for a circle because the 250’ obstacle clearance only applies to the centerline of the final approach course.