

A GUIDE FOR NERVOUS FLYERS · BY ALEX GERVASH

THE TURBULENCE CHECKLIST

Turbulence, explained by a pilot.

A pocket guide for nervous flyers. What turbulence actually is, why the aircraft is never at risk, why your body reacts the way it does, and what to do in the moment fear takes over.

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- What turbulence is, in plain language
 - Why the aircraft is never at risk — with the facts
 - Why your body panics, and why that is normal
 - Techniques that work in the moment of fear
-

Alex Gervash

Commercial pilot · 31 years
Fear-of-flying specialist · 18 years · 16,000+ cases

phobia.aero/video-course
alex@phobia.aero · [@stop_fear_of_flying](https://twitter.com/stop_fear_of_flying)



About me

My name is Alex Gervash. I am a commercial pilot with **31 years of experience** and a specialist in the fear of flying. Over 18 years of practice I have helped more than **16,000 people** change their relationship with flying — they came to me with panic attacks and left as people who fly across an ocean calmly.

My approach rests on two kinds of expertise at once. As a pilot, I know exactly what happens to an aircraft in turbulence. As a psychologist, I understand what happens inside a person, and why logical explanations alone are never enough.

Fear of flying is not a fear of aircraft. It is a fear of losing control. And that can be worked with.

In this guide I have collected everything I know about turbulence: the aviation facts, the psychological explanations, and practical techniques for the moment fear takes over.

Save it. Come back to it every time you need it.

01 What turbulence actually is

Turbulence is irregular air movement. Just as the ocean has waves and currents, the atmosphere has zones where air moves at different speeds and in different directions. When an aircraft passes through such a zone, you feel it as shaking, bumps, or brief changes in altitude.

The analogy that explains everything

Picture a fish in the ocean during a storm. The waves are enormous. The fish is not thrown against the seabed or flung out of the water, because the fish moves *with* the water. It sits inside the flow rather than fighting it.

An aircraft in the air works exactly the same way. It is suspended inside a mass of air. When the air moves, the aircraft moves with it. Shaking is not an aircraft *battling* the air — it is an aircraft *swimming* in it.

Air at altitude is not emptiness

At around 500 mph, the air beneath the wing is a dense, high-pressure medium. Imagine holding your hand out of a car window at 60 mph and feeling the air push against your palm. Multiply that force by sixteen. The aircraft is quite literally resting on a cushion of air. It cannot “fall” out of the air any more than a boat can drop through water.

Where turbulence comes from

Convective	The sun heats the ground and warm air rises in columns. Most common over land, in daytime, in summer.
Mechanical	Air flows around terrain: mountains, buildings, airport structures. Noticeable on takeoff and landing.
Clear-air	High altitude, where air streams meet. No clouds, so it can arrive unannounced.
Climb & descent	Changing altitude means passing through layers with different winds — hence the bumps.

02 Why the aircraft is never at risk

INSIDE THIS SECTION

Zero aircraft brought down by turbulence in history. How the wings flex. Boeing's 90-degree bend test. How pilots handle it in the cockpit.



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03 Why your body panics — and why that is normal

INSIDE THIS SECTION

The vestibular system explained. Why a 30-foot bump feels like a 300-foot drop. The link to early experience. Why business class sometimes feels easier.



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04 What can I do for myself right now?

INSIDE THIS SECTION

The SkyGuru app. AlexAI conversations. The skybriefing.org turbulence forecast. The free lesson on aviation safety.



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Three techniques for the moment of panic

INSIDE THIS SECTION

Ground yourself through your feet. Breathe 3-6. Look at the cabin crew.
Bonus: release your body.



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06 Five facts worth remembering

INSIDE THIS SECTION

Never brought an aircraft down. Flexible wings are protection. The 5G structural margin. Your fear is real, the threat is not. The seatbelt closes the only real risk.



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07 Fear of flying is treatable

INSIDE THIS SECTION

18 years, 16,000+ cases. Why facts and logic only get you part of the way. How the Fly with Confidence course works. Why Alex is uniquely placed to help.



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08 Now is the time

INSIDE THIS SECTION

The invitation to start with the free lesson. Why every flight after gets a little easier than the one before.



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Alex publishes a weekly letter for nervous flyers — pilot insight, psychology, and calm answers to the questions you did not know how to ask.

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