

87 percent, depending on how much the propeller “slips.” Propeller slip is the difference between the geometric pitch of the propeller and its effective pitch. [Figure 5-45] Geometric pitch is the theoretical distance a propeller should advance in one revolution; effective pitch is the distance it actually advances. Thus, geometric or theoretical pitch is based on no slippage, but actual or effective pitch includes propeller slippage in the air.

The reason a propeller is “twisted” is that the outer parts of the propeller blades, like all things that turn about a central point, travel faster than the portions near the hub. [Figure 5-46] If the blades had the same geometric pitch throughout their lengths, portions near the hub could have negative AOAs while the propeller tips would be stalled at cruise speed. Twisting or variations in the geometric pitch of the blades permits the propeller to operate with a relatively constant AOA along its length when in cruising flight. Propeller blades are twisted to change the blade angle in proportion to the differences in speed of rotation along the length of the propeller, keeping thrust more nearly equalized along this length.

Usually  $1^\circ$  to  $4^\circ$  provides the most efficient lift/drag ratio, but in flight the propeller AOA of a fixed-pitch propeller varies—normally from  $0^\circ$  to  $15^\circ$ . This variation is caused by changes in the relative airstream, which in turn results from changes in aircraft speed. Thus, propeller AOA is the product of two motions: propeller rotation about its axis and its forward motion.

A constant-speed propeller automatically keeps the blade angle adjusted for maximum efficiency for most conditions encountered in flight. During takeoff, when maximum power and thrust are required, the constant-speed propeller is at a low propeller blade angle or pitch. The low blade angle keeps the AOA small and efficient with respect to the relative wind. At the same time, it allows the propeller to handle a smaller mass of air per revolution. This light load allows the engine to turn at high rpm and to convert the maximum amount of fuel into heat energy in a given time. The high rpm also creates maximum thrust because, although the mass of air handled per revolution is small, the rpm and slipstream velocity are

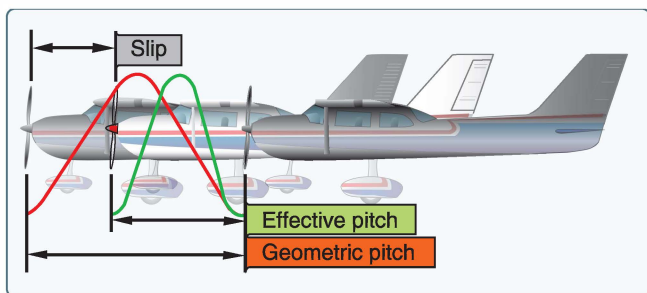


Figure 5-45. Propeller slippage.

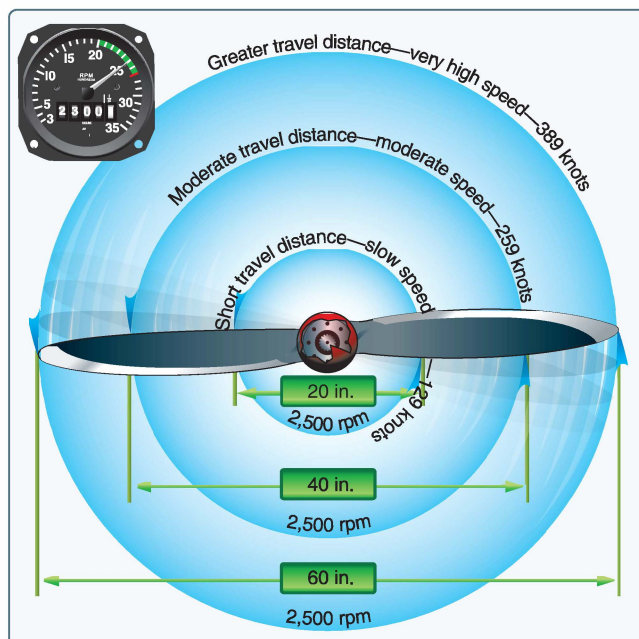


Figure 5-46. Propeller tips travel faster than the hub.

high, and with the low aircraft speed, there is maximum thrust. After liftoff, as the speed of the aircraft increases, the constant-speed propeller automatically changes to a higher angle (or pitch). Again, the higher blade angle keeps the AOA small and efficient with respect to the relative wind. The higher blade angle increases the mass of air handled per revolution. This decreases the engine rpm, reducing fuel consumption and engine wear, and keeps thrust at a maximum.

After the takeoff climb is established in an aircraft having a controllable-pitch propeller, the pilot reduces the power output of the engine to climb power by first decreasing the manifold pressure and then increasing the blade angle to lower the rpm.

At cruising altitude, when the aircraft is in level flight and less power is required than is used in takeoff or climb, the pilot again reduces engine power by reducing the manifold pressure and then increasing the blade angle to decrease the rpm. Again, this provides a torque requirement to match the reduced engine power. Although the mass of air handled per revolution is greater, it is more than offset by a decrease in slipstream velocity and an increase in airspeed. The AOA is still small because the blade angle has been increased with an increase in airspeed.

### Torque and P-Factor

To the pilot, “torque” (the left turning tendency of the airplane) is made up of four elements that cause or produce a twisting or rotating motion around at least one of the airplane’s three axes. These four elements are:

1. Torque reaction from engine and propeller

2. Corkscrewing effect of the slipstream
3. Gyroscopic action of the propeller
4. Asymmetric loading of the propeller (P-factor)

### Torque Reaction

Torque reaction involves Newton's Third Law of Physics—for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. As applied to the aircraft, this means that as the internal engine parts and propeller are revolving in one direction, an equal force is trying to rotate the aircraft in the opposite direction. [Figure 5-47]

When the aircraft is airborne, this force is acting around the longitudinal axis, tending to make the aircraft roll. To compensate for roll tendency, some of the older aircraft are rigged in a manner to create more lift on the wing that is being forced downward. The more modern aircraft are designed with the engine offset to counteract this effect of torque.

NOTE: Most United States built aircraft engines rotate the propeller clockwise, as viewed from the pilot's seat. The discussion here is with reference to those engines.

Generally, the compensating factors are permanently set so that they compensate for this force at cruising speed, since most of the aircraft's operating time is at that speed. However, aileron trim tabs permit further adjustment for other speeds. When the aircraft's wheels are on the ground during the takeoff roll, an additional turning moment around the vertical axis is induced by torque reaction. As the left side of the aircraft is being forced down by torque reaction, more weight is being placed on the left main landing gear. This results in more ground friction, or drag, on the left tire than on the right, causing a further turning moment to the left. The magnitude of this moment is dependent on many variables. Some of these variables are:

1. Size and horsepower of engine
2. Size of propeller and the rpm
3. Size of the aircraft
4. Condition of the ground surface

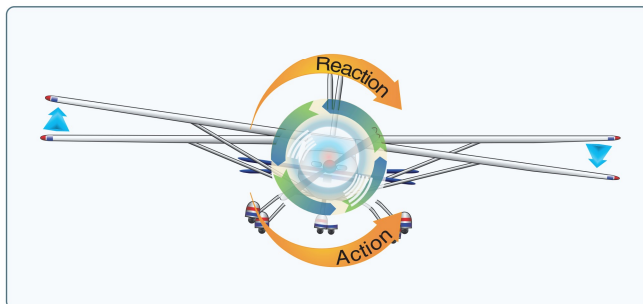


Figure 5-47. Torque reaction.

This yawing moment on the takeoff roll is corrected by the pilot's proper use of the rudder or rudder trim.

### Corkscrew Effect

The high-speed rotation of an aircraft propeller gives a corkscrew or spiraling rotation to the slipstream. At high propeller speeds and low forward speed (as in the takeoffs and approaches to power-on stalls), this spiraling rotation is very compact and exerts a strong sideward force on the aircraft's vertical tail surface. [Figure 5-48]

When this spiraling slipstream strikes the vertical fin, it causes a yawing moment about the aircraft's vertical axis. The more compact the spiral, the more prominent this force is. As the forward speed increases, however, the spiral elongates and becomes less effective. The corkscrew flow of the slipstream also causes a rolling moment around the longitudinal axis.

Note that this rolling moment caused by the corkscrew flow of the slipstream is to the right, while the yawing moment caused by torque reaction is to the left—in effect one may be counteracting the other. However, these forces vary greatly and it is the pilot's responsibility to apply proper corrective action by use of the flight controls at all times. These forces must be counteracted regardless of which is the most prominent at the time.

### Gyroscopic Action

Before the gyroscopic effects of the propeller can be understood, it is necessary to understand the basic principle of a gyroscope. All practical applications of the gyroscope are based upon two fundamental properties of gyroscopic action: rigidity in space and precession. The one of interest for this discussion is precession.

Precession is the resultant action, or deflection, of a spinning rotor when a deflecting force is applied to its rim. As can be seen in Figure 5-49, when a force is applied, the resulting force takes effect 90° ahead of and in the direction of rotation. The rotating propeller of an airplane makes a very good

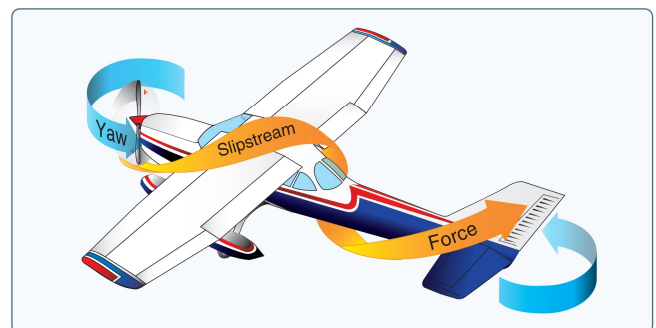
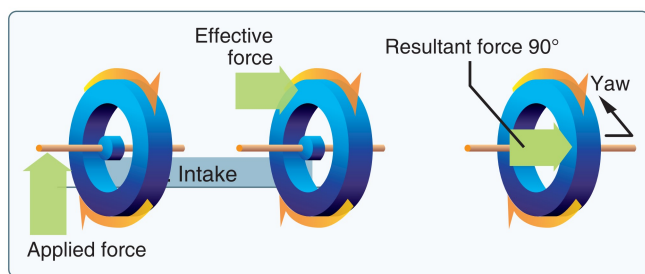


Figure 5-48. Corkscrewing slipstream.

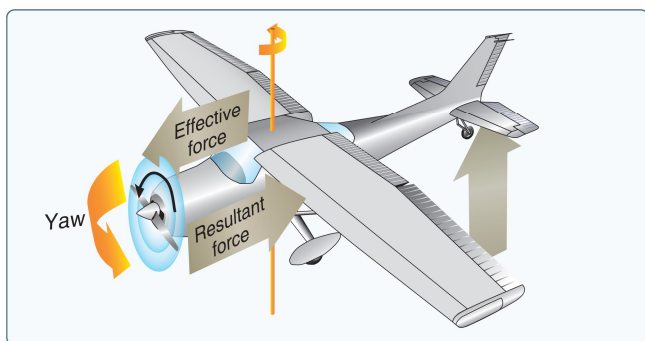


**Figure 5-49.** *Gyroscopic precession.*

gyroscope and thus has similar properties. Any time a force is applied to deflect the propeller out of its plane of rotation, the resulting force is 90° ahead of and in the direction of rotation and in the direction of application, causing a pitching moment, a yawing moment, or a combination of the two depending upon the point at which the force was applied.

This element of torque effect has always been associated with and considered more prominent in tailwheel-type aircraft and most often occurs when the tail is being raised during the takeoff roll. [Figure 5-50] This change in pitch attitude has the same effect as applying a force to the top of the propeller's plane of rotation. The resultant force acting 90° ahead causes a yawing moment to the left around the vertical axis. The magnitude of this moment depends on several variables, one of which is the abruptness with which the tail is raised (amount of force applied). However, precession, or gyroscopic action, occurs when a force is applied to any point on the rim of the propeller's plane of rotation; the resultant force will still be 90° from the point of application in the direction of rotation. Depending on where the force is applied, the airplane is caused to yaw left or right, to pitch up or down, or a combination of pitching and yawing.

It can be said that, as a result of gyroscopic action, any yawing around the vertical axis results in a pitching moment, and any pitching around the lateral axis results in a yawing moment. To correct for the effect of gyroscopic action, it is necessary for the pilot to properly use elevator and rudder to prevent undesired pitching and yawing.



**Figure 5-50.** *Raising tail produces gyroscopic precession.*

## Asymmetric Loading (P-Factor)

When an aircraft is flying with a high AOA, the “bite” of the downward moving blade is greater than the “bite” of the upward moving blade. This moves the center of thrust to the right of the prop disc area, causing a yawing moment toward the left around the vertical axis. Proving this explanation is complex because it would be necessary to work wind vector problems on each blade while considering both the AOA of the aircraft and the AOA of each blade.

This asymmetric loading is caused by the resultant velocity, which is generated by the combination of the velocity of the propeller blade in its plane of rotation and the velocity of the air passing horizontally through the propeller disc. With the aircraft being flown at positive AOAs, the right (viewed from the rear) or downswinging blade, is passing through an area of resultant velocity, which is greater than that affecting the left or upswinging blade. Since the propeller blade is an airfoil, increased velocity means increased lift. The downswinging blade has more lift and tends to pull (yaw) the aircraft's nose to the left.

When the aircraft is flying at a high AOA, the downward moving blade has a higher resultant velocity, creating more lift than the upward moving blade. [Figure 5-51] This might be easier to visualize if the propeller shaft was mounted perpendicular to the ground (like a helicopter). If there were no air movement at all, except that generated by the propeller itself, identical sections of each blade would have the same airspeed. With air moving horizontally across this vertically mounted propeller, the blade proceeding forward into the flow of air has a higher airspeed than the blade retreating with the airflow. Thus, the blade proceeding into the horizontal airflow is creating more lift, or thrust, moving the center of thrust toward that blade. Visualize rotating the vertically mounted propeller shaft to shallower angles relative to the moving air (as on an aircraft). This unbalanced thrust then becomes proportionately smaller and continues getting smaller until it reaches the value of zero when the propeller shaft is exactly horizontal in relation to the moving air.

The effects of each of these four elements of torque vary in value with changes in flight situations. In one phase of flight, one of these elements may be more prominent than another. In another phase of flight, another element may be more prominent. The relationship of these values to each other varies with different aircraft depending on the airframe, engine, and propeller combinations, as well as other design features. To maintain positive control of the aircraft in all flight conditions, the pilot must apply the flight controls as necessary to compensate for these varying values.