

About Scheduling Software

Scheduling flying club resources can be both a challenge and an opportunity. How can it be an opportunity? If you are just using scheduling as a tool to solve problems, you will focus on who has the aircraft and for how long; however, if you are using scheduling as a strategic communication and safety tool, you will deliver an exceptional user experience and maintain a safer operation.

EAA took a look at several flying club scheduling tools and each has its pros and cons. Before we get into our findings, please keep in mind that the emphasis here is on the word “tool.” The temptation for a flying club is to throw financial resources at a problem, when often the root of the problem is communication. Building a culture of commitment to the operating rules of your club is the foundation; the scheduling tool will facilitate execution of elements of those operating rules.

Before you select a scheduling tool, define what you want to track. Here is a list of items some clubs track with their scheduling software:

- Club Members and Leadership – Names, Contact Information
- Assets – Descriptions, Manuals, Maintenance Logs
- Schedule – Flight, Maintenance
- Finances – Dues, Rental Fees
- Aircraft Safety – Airworthiness Directives (AD), Special Airworthiness Information Bulletins (SAIB), Renter Squawks and Out-Of-Service Notices
- Member Safety – Medical Expirations, Biennial Flight Review Dates, Club Currency and Recurrent Training Requirements, Incident Reports

Most small flying clubs looking to save money should be able to build a really nice scheduling program using a free program like [Book Our Plane](#) and supplement it with maintaining financial records on Google Sheets and using a paper system or money sending program to handle transactions. However, if you want a system that doesn't require much additional work on your part and handles financial transactions, pilot lockouts for FAA Medical and BFRs and much more, [Flight Circle](#) is worth consideration.

Review of Scheduling Programs

This review looked at several scheduling tools that didn't make the cut typically because they were more costly but didn't add value ([Aircraft Clubs](#), [Sky Manager](#), [Pilot Schedule](#), [Tach and Hobbs](#), and [Flight Schedule Pro](#)).

Homegrown – this can be a mix of online platforms, including but not limited to Google Drive/Docs/Sheets/Calendar, Facebook, WordPress, etc. The pros are that it is free and customizable. The cons are that it is web-based (requires internet to update), takes time to setup, and can be challenging to use for some people.

- **Fees** – Free
- **Club Members and Leadership** – track in a shared Google Sheet or Facebook Private Group
- **Assets** – Descriptions can be tracked in a Google Doc or Facebook Page, Manuals such as a POH and Maintenance Logs can be scanned, uploaded and shared on Google Drive.



- **Schedule** – Assets and can be set up as a person and assigned a Google Calendar with shared access to all members, a Calendar invite can be created to reserve an aircraft, Subjects can describe the type of activity being performed (e.g., Rent, Maintenance, Training, etc.)
- **Finances** – A Google Sheet can be created to track club finances; myriad ways to conduct transactions
- **Aircraft Safety** – Lookup of ADs and SAIBs is manual; Renter Squawks and Out-Of-Service Notices can be communicated on the Calendar and via a group Text/Email
- **Member Safety** – Medical Expirations, Biennial Flight Review Dates, Club Currency and Recurrent Training Requirements can all be tracked on one shared Google Calendar with invites to the affected party and logged in a Google Sheet; Incident Reports can be collected via Google Forms and pictures stored on Google Drive

Book Our Plane – This free, web-based application is all about scheduling, it has been around for a long time, was designed by a flying club, and has a large install base. The pros are that it is free and saves configuration time versus a Homegrown solution. The cons are that it is web-based (requires internet to update), only handles scheduling and document storage, and is not customizable.

- **Fees** – Free
- **Club Members and Leadership** – easy to invite members and stores contact information, can create access for 6 user roles; Flight Instructor availability is posted
- **Assets** – Dashboard shows asset description and status; manuals, and maintenance logs can be scanned and uploaded.
- **Schedule** – Click on an opening in a schedule grid, complete a form and you're ready to go. Grid is color-coded, identifies type of booking, and marks day/night hours.
- **Finances** – Not available.
- **Aircraft Safety** – Lookup of ADs and SAIBs is manual but can be stored on the site; Renter Squawks and Out-Of-Service Notices can be communicated on the schedule
- **Member Safety** – Not available.

Flight Circle – Launched in 2014, this is a one-stop solution for your flying club's scheduling, maintenance, and billing needs. With many automated alerts and powerful reporting, you can bring everything together in one central place to reduce the administrative time and fly more. Flight Circle is simple and easy to use, and packs a lot of power for just \$10 per month, per aircraft.

- **Fees** – \$10/asset per month (5% discount for annual payment)
- **Club Members and Leadership** – Tracks all users and has defined features and roles for instructors, maintenance and members. Combining scheduling and billing in one central place means everyone is on the same page.
- **Assets** – Displays aircraft description and status; Hobbs/Tach time, maintenance and squawk tracking, and oil and fuel usage.
- **Schedule** – Click on an opening in a schedule grid, and you're ready to go. Back/standby reservation, RideShare to schedule with a friend, and 24-hour reminder emails help prevent cancellations. Member directory, on-screen weather, and more make this a feature rich and easy to use.

- **Finances** – Keep up with member charges, payments, and balances, including membership dues and online payments, with full billing. Members can see their balance and account online anytime. Contract feature allows including flight time in membership dues to promote a safe and active pilot. A one-click Billing feature makes sending email statements a breeze.
- **Aircraft Safety** – Lookup of ADs and SAIBs is manual but can be stored on the site; Renter Squawks and Out-Of-Service Notices can be communicated on the schedule.
- **Member Safety** – Restrict scheduling if past local or FAA flight review periods, insurance expired or medical expired, student solo endorsement, or if simply not checked out in an aircraft yet. Automated email alerts to users and helpful reports help keep an eye on safety.