

# Roundtable Notes: Made in Motor City

- “Formation” implies there’s a flight lead doing all the communications and decision-making for the group. This shouldn’t be done without training. Simply flying as two airplanes with visual separation but each flying their own flight is fine. (Richard)
- Joining up with another airplane—even just finding them—is really challenging. (Everyone)
- This scenario is a recipe for disaster: untrained pilots with an aerial rejoin, one pilot squinting into the sun, complex airspace, and potential miscommunications with the photo work. (Dave)
- You learn as a passenger how much goes into formation flying. There’s briefing, debriefing, and a lot of coordination in flight. (JP)
- A good lead pilot can maximize the overlap in performance of dissimilar airplanes. The lead must fly within the performance envelope of both aircraft. (Dave)
- Mass arrivals can be a potential danger for similar reasons, even if they aren’t close formation. (Paul and Richard)

*“This scenario is exceptionally realistic, and it gives me the cold sweats because I’ve been part of so many formation photo flights gone wrong.” — Dave*

- Thinking that the lead pilot can just hold altitude and heading while another pilot flies into different positions around them is a trap. The most experienced pilot should be the lead. (Dave and Richard)
- Without a proper briefing, the photographer can become the de facto lead, which is a terrible idea. (Wally)
- It’s really hard to tell the photographer “no,” even if the position is an unsafe place to fly. (Dave)
- Sometimes flying farther apart is harder, especially in turns. (Dave)
- What’s the gain for all this risk of formation and airspace, just to get good pictures? How is that worthwhile? (Paul)
- Formation is one of the few things in GA we get to do as a team, so it is really satisfying when done safely. (Dave and Richard)

## CHOICES BY EXPERT

Richard .....	4
Dave .....	4
Elaine .....	4
JP .....	4
Paul.....	4
Wally.....	4

**1**

**A**

Lake St. Clair

**B**

Meet over Lake St. Clair. Practice getting into formation and communicating before dealing with busy airspace. If that goes well, form up and head down the Detroit River as planned.

**2**

**A**

**B**

Do a formation photo flight away from busy airspace. If that goes well, schedule a different morning to do the photo flight down the Detroit River.

**3**

**A**

**B**

Do a practice formation flight away from busy airspace. If that goes well, schedule a different morning to do the formation photo flight down the Detroit River.

**4**

*Thanks, but no thanks*

Tell your friend he’ll have to find another pilot for this project. You’re simply too uncomfortable doing this kind of flying in this busy airspace.