

# Flight Instruments and Avionics

## **Objective**

To understand the basic flight instruments used for flight, their limitations and biases, plus common failure modes.

## **Motivation**

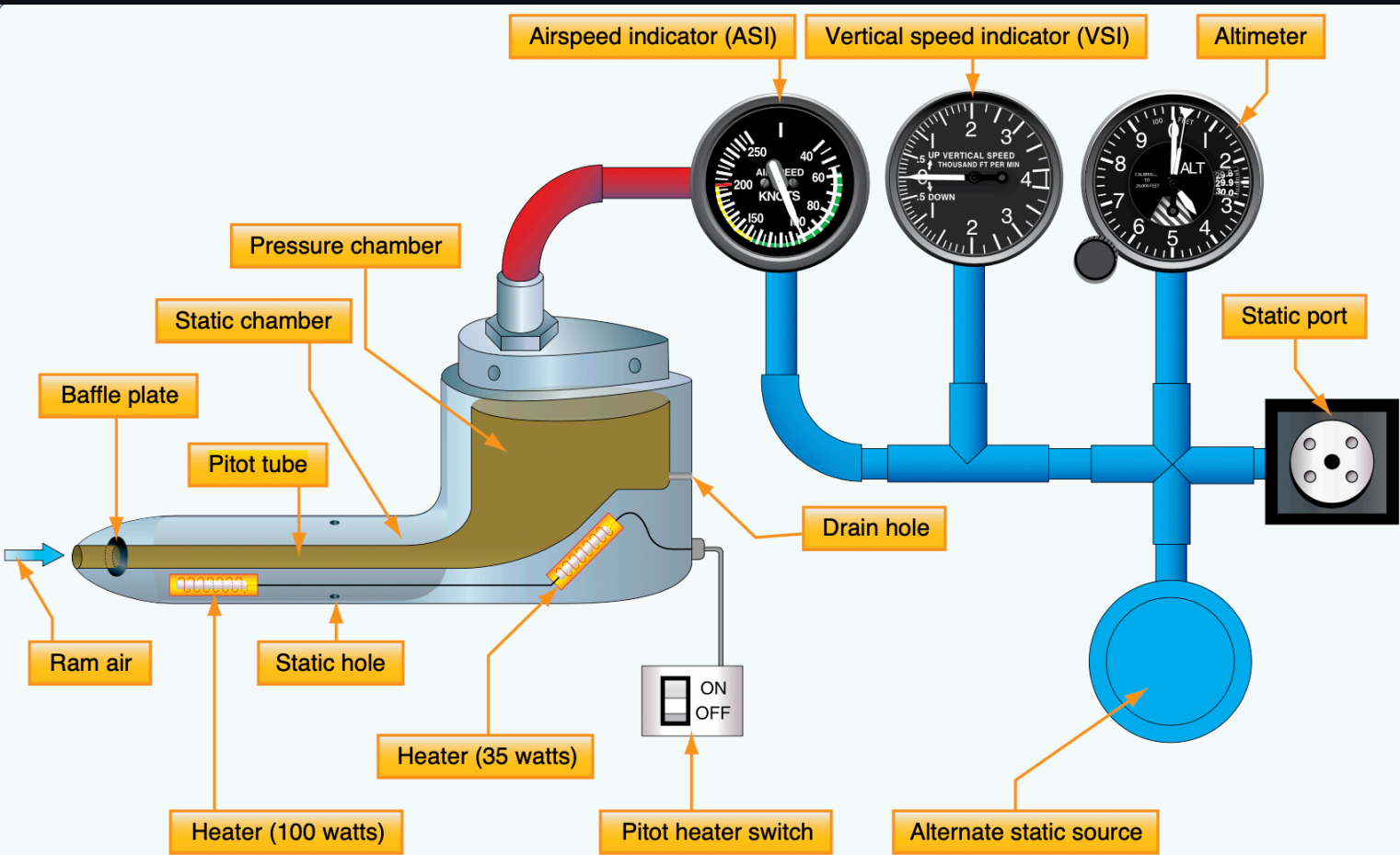
To give a student an intuitive understanding of the operation of the flight instruments, and a sense of how they will behave if they malfunction.

# Overview

- Pitot-Static instruments
  - Altimeter
  - Vertical Speed Indicator
  - Vertical Speed Indicator
  - Airspeed indicator
- Pitot-static port blockages
- Inclinator
- Gyroscopic and vacuum Instruments
  - Attitude Indicator
  - Directional Gyro/Heading Indicator
  - Horizontal Situation Indicator (HSI)
- AHRS and EFIS Systems
- Vacuum System Failures
- Magnetic Compass
  - Compass errors

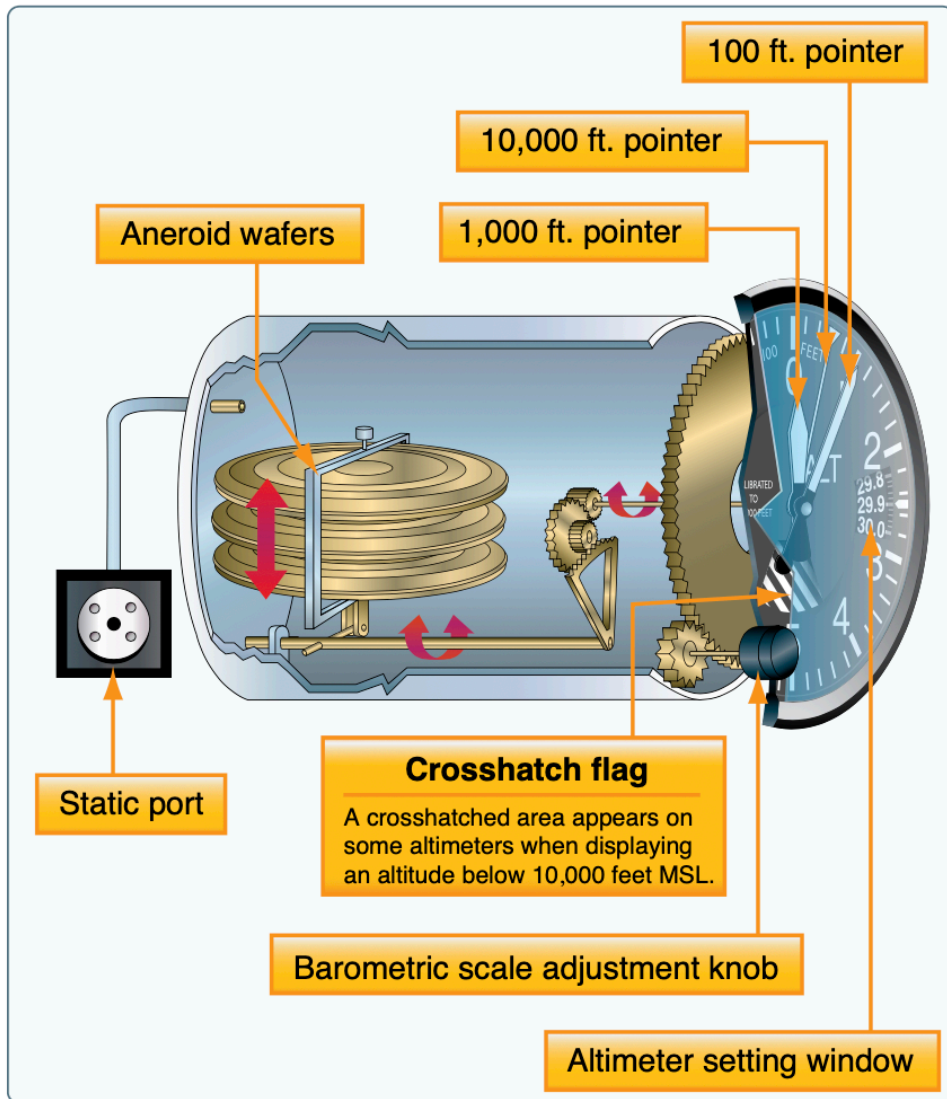






## Pitot-Static instruments

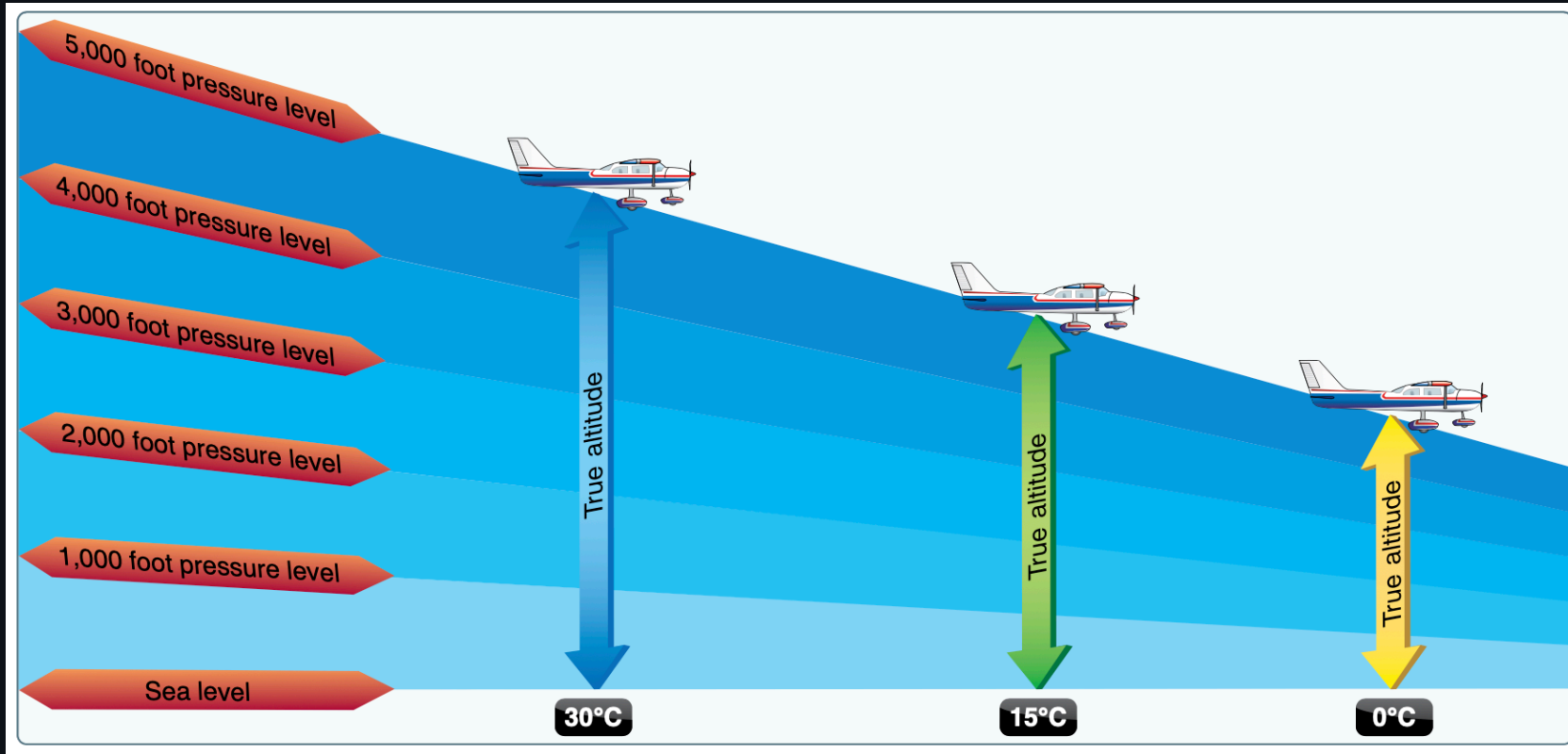
- Static port: Ambient air pressure
- Pitot tube: Ram air pressure, in the relative wind flow



# Altimeter

- Converts barometric pressure into altitude
- Calibrated to the lapse rate of the standard atmosphere ( $2^{\circ}$  per 1000', 1" Hg per 1000')
- Calibrated to the temperature of the standard atmosphere ( $15^{\circ}$  @ S.L.)
- Kollsman window allows for calibrating the atmosphere indicator up and down
  - Window does have a set range

# Nonstandard Temperature Errors

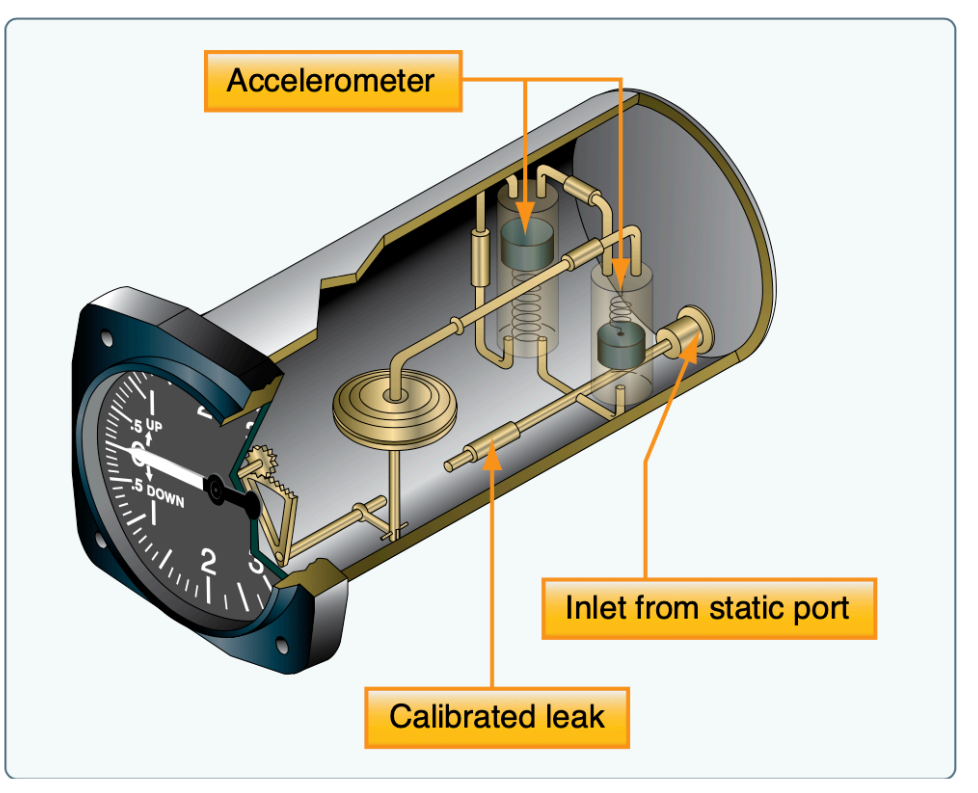


- Colder temperatures: "Compress" the column of air below, altimeter reads higher
- Hotter temperature: "Expand" the column of air below, altimeter reads lower

## Types of Altitude

- Indicated altitude: Read from the altimeter
- True altitude: Vertical distance from mean sea level
- Absolute altitude: Vertical distance above terrain (AGL)
- Pressure altitude: Read from altimeter when set to 29.92"
  - Height in the standard atmosphere where the ambient pressure is found
- Density altitude: Pressure altitude corrected for nonstandard temperature

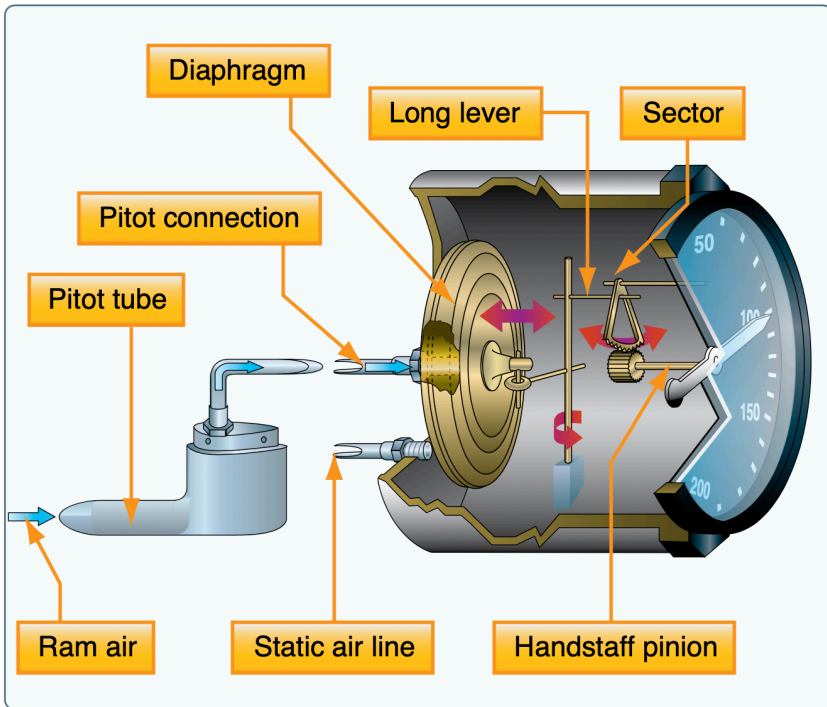




## Instantaneous Vertical Speed Indicator (IVSI)

- Accelerometer weights help lead the indication before pressure changes





## Airspeed indicator

- $\text{Airspeed} = (\text{Ram air pressure} - \text{static pressure})$
- Operates with a diaphragm

## Types of Airspeed

- Indicated airspeed (IAS): Read from altimeter
- Calibrated airspeed (CAS): Calibrated for position/instrument errors
  - At slow airspeeds this may be several knots off
- True airspeed (TAS): CAS corrected for altitude and nonstandard temperature
- Ground speed (GS): Actual speed over the ground
  - TAS adjusted for wind

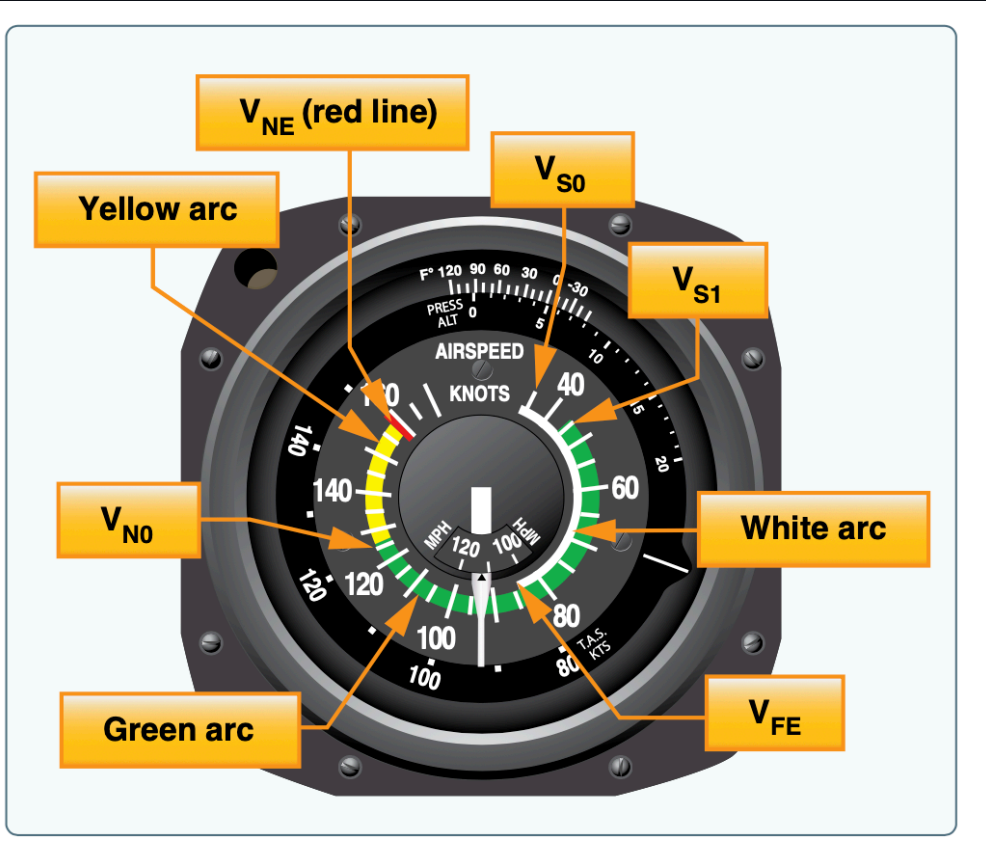
# IAS vs CAS

## CONDITIONS:

Power required for level flight or maximum power descent.

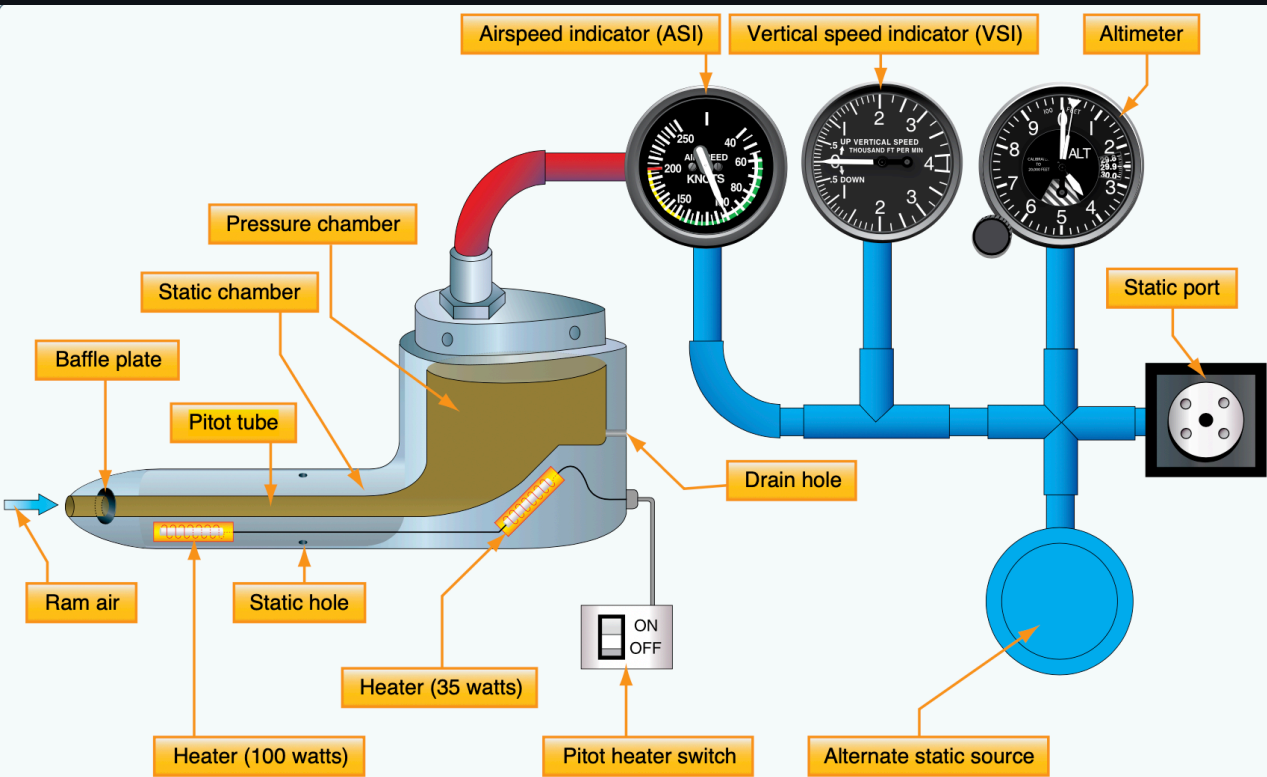
FLAPS UP														
KIAS	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	140	150	160	170	
KCAS	61	65	72	80	89	99	109	118	128	138	147	157	167	
FLAPS 20°														
KIAS	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	---	---	---	---	---	---	
KCAS	54	58	63	71	80	89	94	---	---	---	---	---	---	
FLAPS FULL														
KIAS	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	---	---	---	---	---	---	
KCAS	52	57	63	71	80	90	95	---	---	---	---	---	---	

Figure 5-1. Airspeed Calibration (Sheet 1 of 2)



## Airspeed Indicator Markings

- V<sub>S0</sub>: Stall speed in landing configuration
- V<sub>S1</sub>: Stall speed in clean configuration
- V<sub>FE</sub>: Flap extension speed (full flaps)
- V<sub>NO</sub>: Maximum structural cruising speed (smooth air only)
- V<sub>NE</sub>: Never exceed speed
- Notice V<sub>A</sub> is not marked



## Pitot Blockages

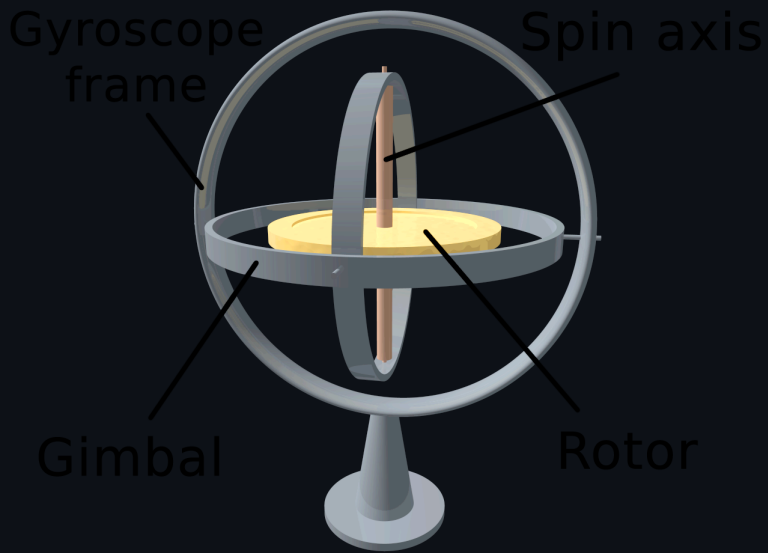
- Ram air block: Airspeed reads 0
- Ram air + drain hole blocked:
  - Airspeed reads whatever it was when it was blocked
  - If you descend it'll read lower, higher if ascending

## Static Port Blockages

- Alternate static source vents into the cockpit
- Pressure is **higher**, since there is usually a venturi effect around the static port
  - Altimeter reads slightly high
  - Airspeed will read slightly higher ( $RAM - static = airspeed$ )
  - VSI will momentarily indicate a climb, then settle

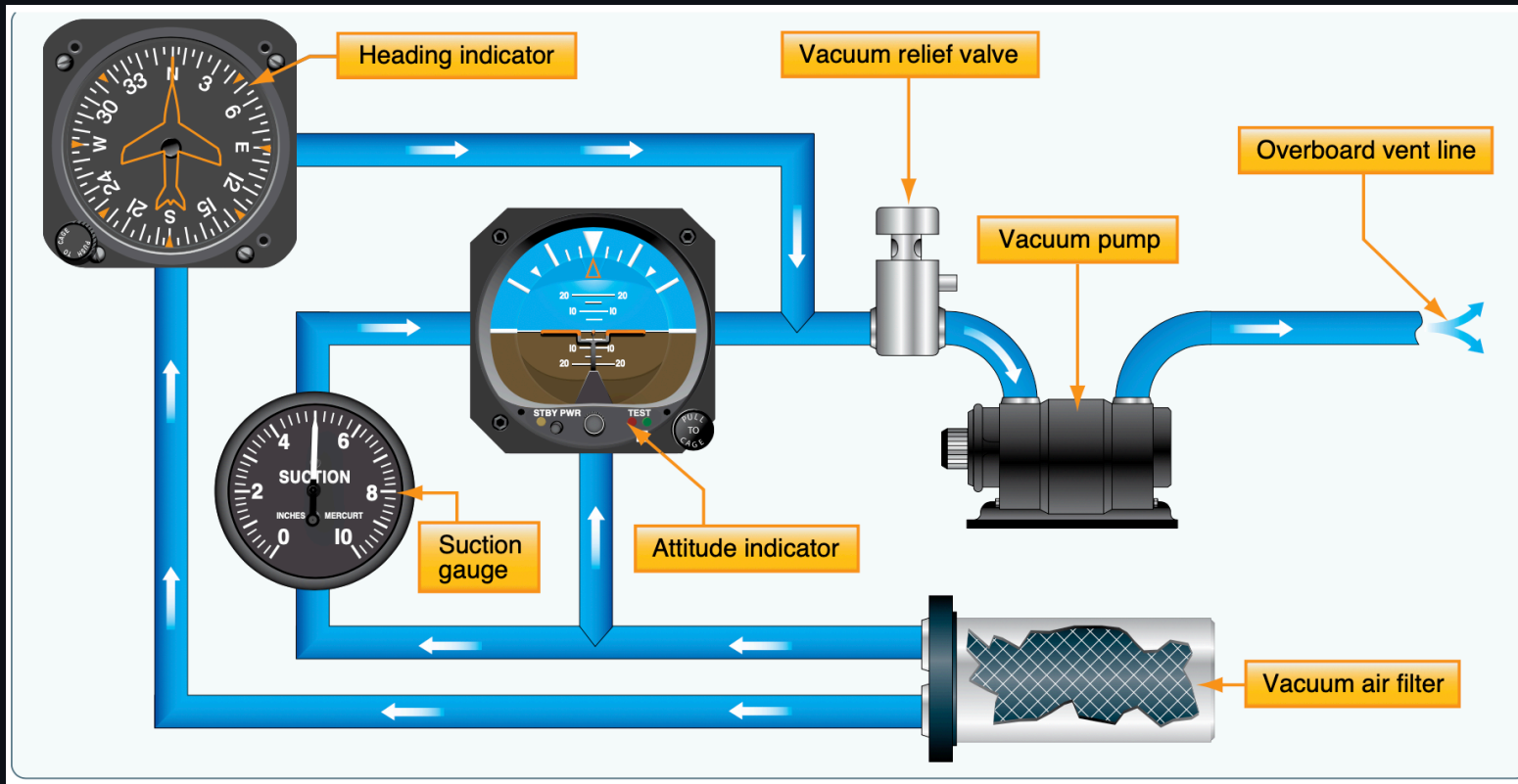


# Gyroscopic Instruments



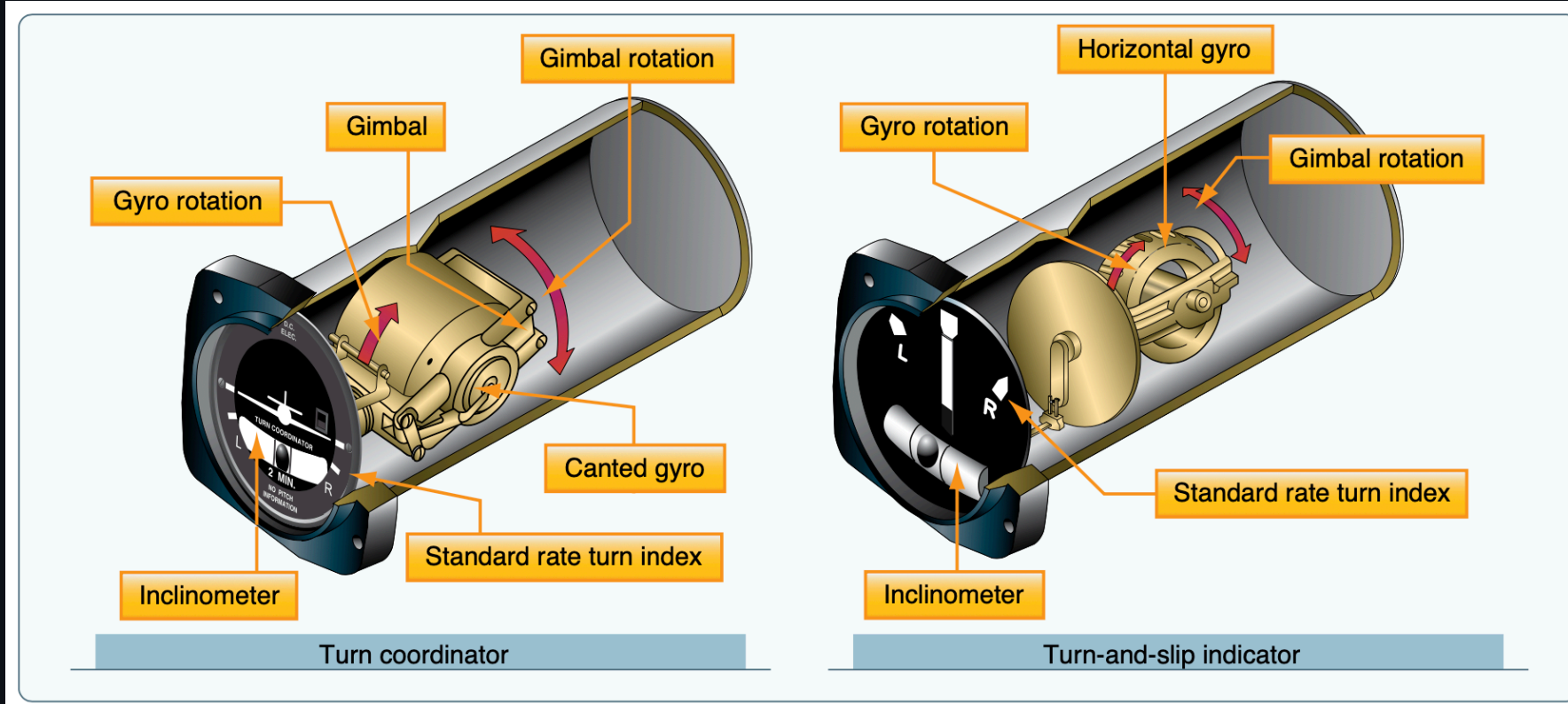
- Operate on the principle of gyroscopic stability
- Corollary: Bicycle wheel stability at low vs high speeds
- Mechanical flight instruments use a spinning rotor
  - Vacuum pump (engine-driven or electric)
  - Pressure
  - Electrical motor
- Aircraft rotates around the gyro

# Vacuum Instruments



- In a standard "six pack":
  - Vacuum-driven gyroscopic system drive the attitude and heading indicators
  - Sometimes the turn coordinator

# Turn Coordinator



- 1-axis gyro
- Indicates rate of yaw/turn rate around the vertical axis
- No primary bank information



Slipping turn



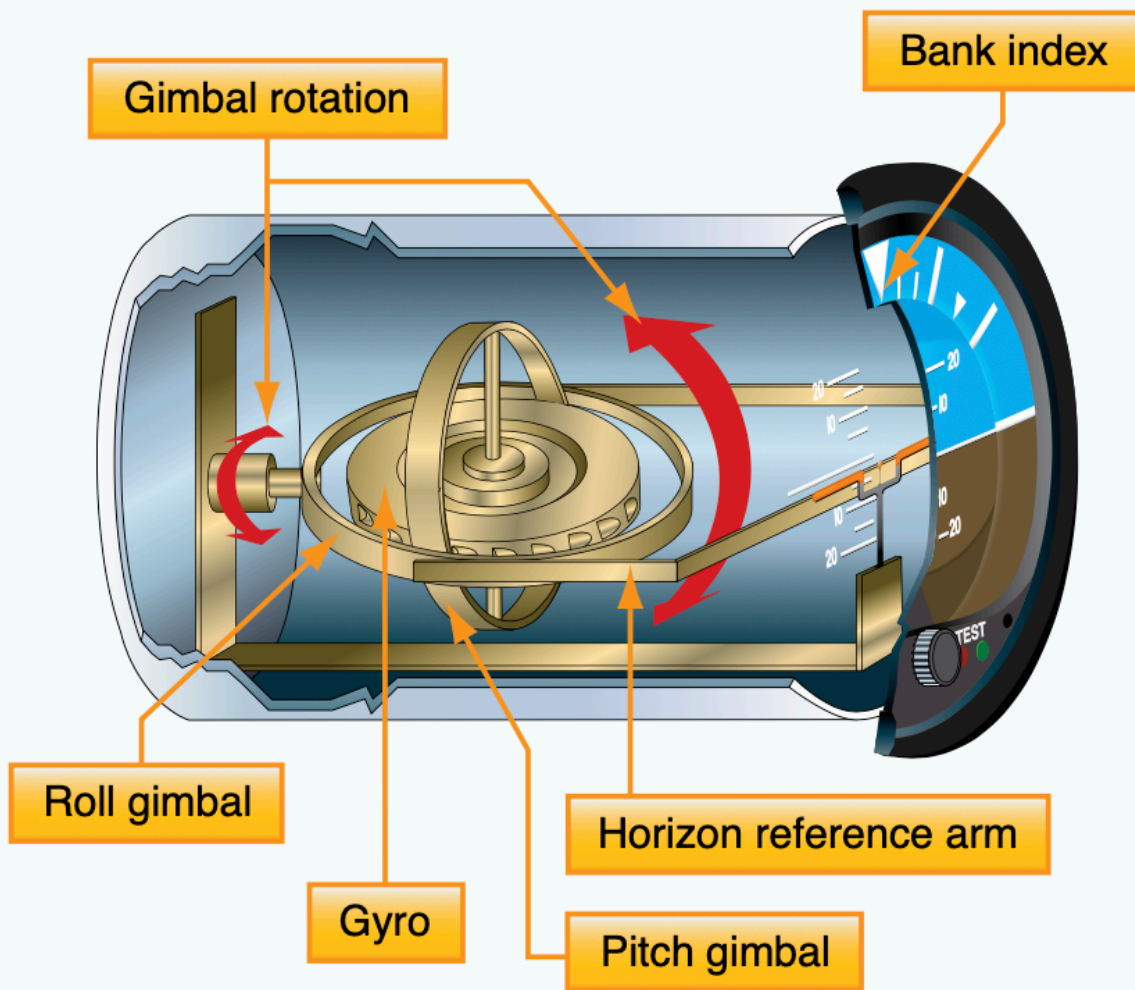
Skidding turn



Coordinated turn

## Inclinometer

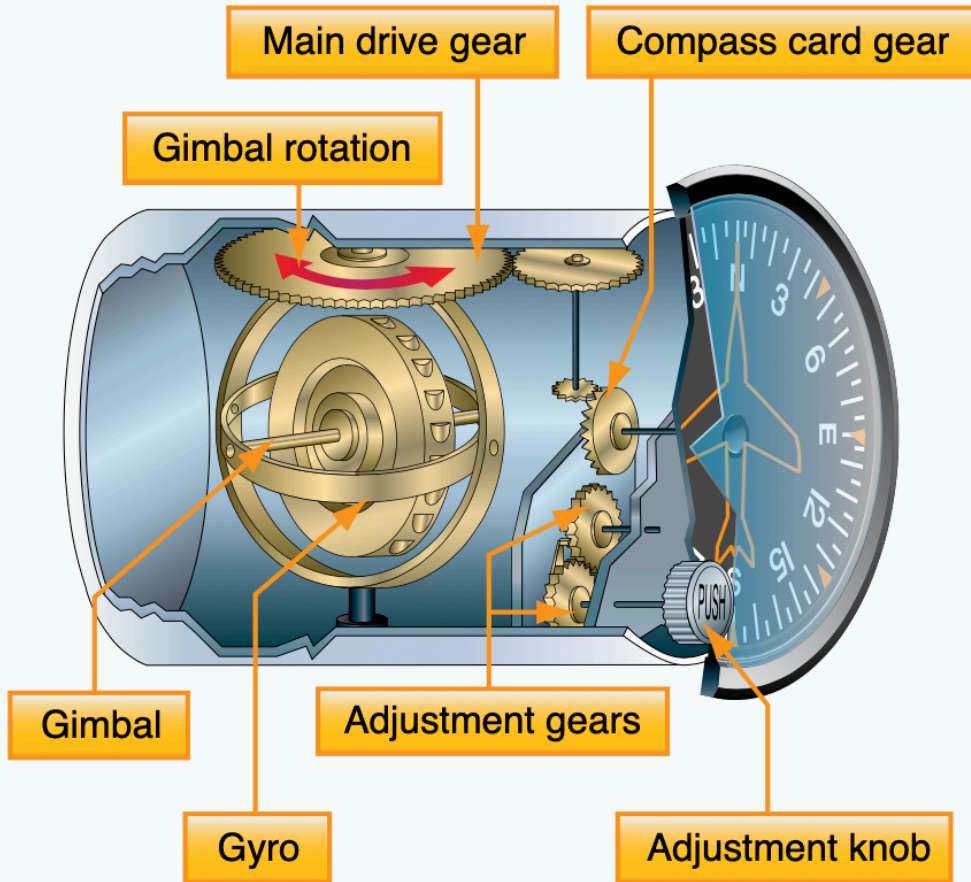
- Not a gyro instrument
- Ball with mass in a fluid, like a level



## Attitude indicator

- Indicates rotational position of the longitudinal (pitch) and lateral axis (roll)
- Adjustment knob to set horizon to level
- Pitch limit usually around 100-110°
- Bank limit around 60-70°

# Directional Gyro/Heading Indicator



- Indicates rotational position about the vertical axis
- Must be continually calibrated with the magnetic compass
  - Earth rotates in space at a rate of  $15^\circ$  in 1 hour
  - Gyroscopic precession: gimbal is not frictionless, small forces cause position drift





## Horizontal Situation Indicator (HSI)

- Often overlay VOR CDI needles
- Some can be "slaved" to a magnetic sensing device
  - Eliminates the need to manually calibrate with the magnetic compass

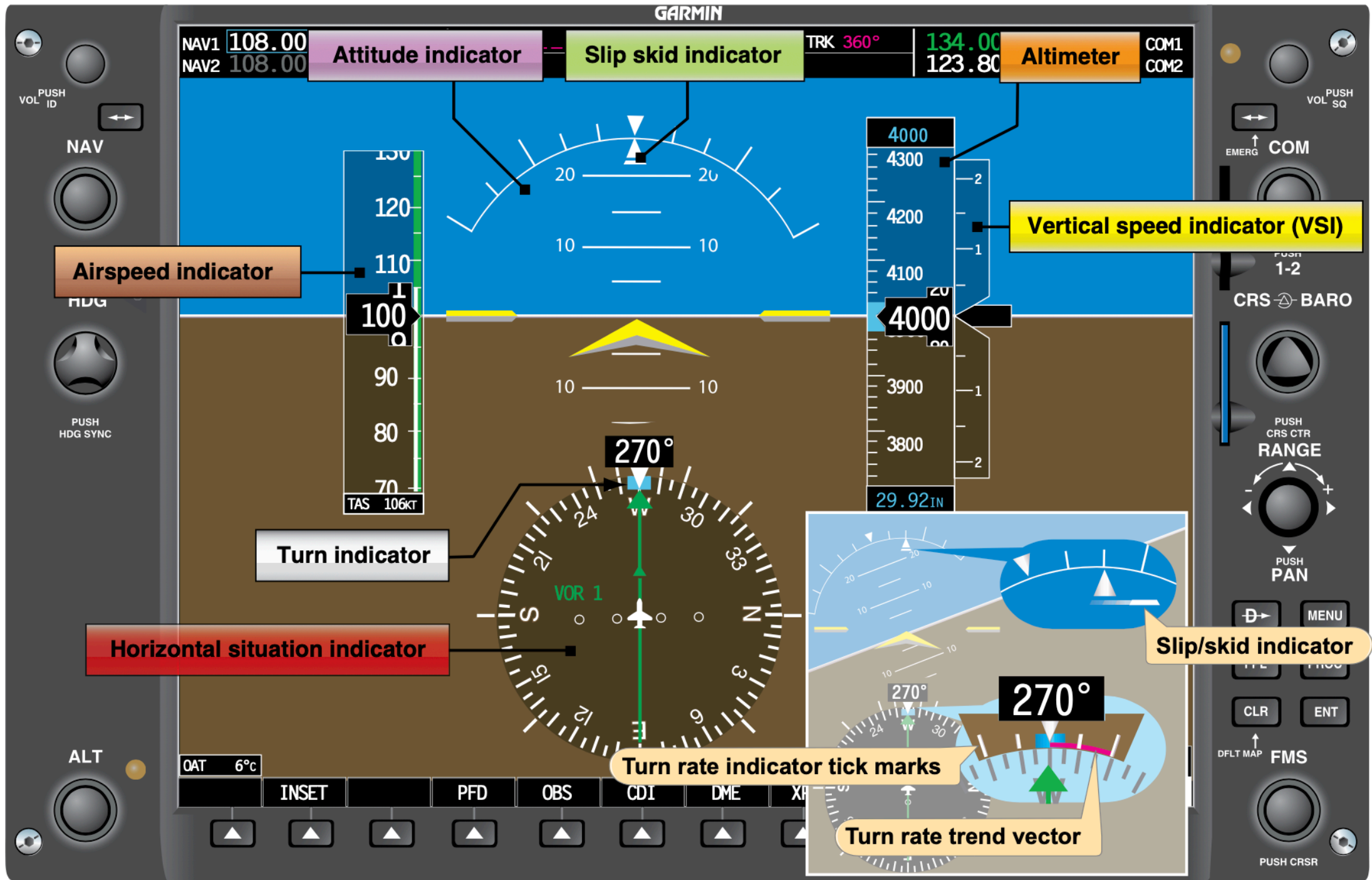


## Attitude and Heading Reference System (AHRS)

- No moving parts
- Uses accelerometers for roll/pitch/yaw information
- Use a magnetometer for heading information, often mounted on the wing
- Feeds modern glass-panel displays
- Less susceptible to mechanical failures

## Vacuum System Failures

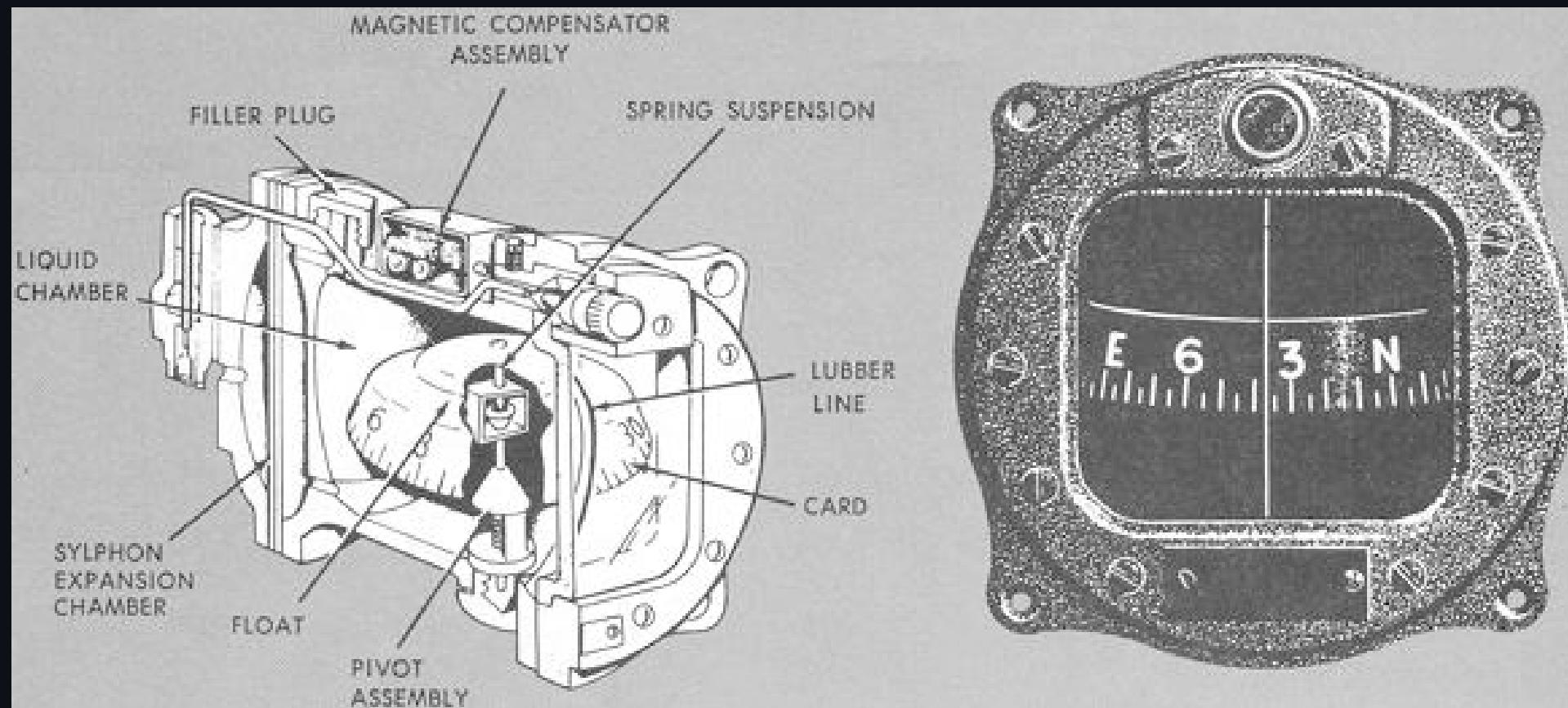
- A loss of vacuum pressure will result in a slow spin-down of gyros
- An attitude indicator will show a slow lean/dive
- Utilize a cross-checking scan





# Magnetic Compass

- Self-contained, no power needed
- Operates on the magnetic pull of the Earth

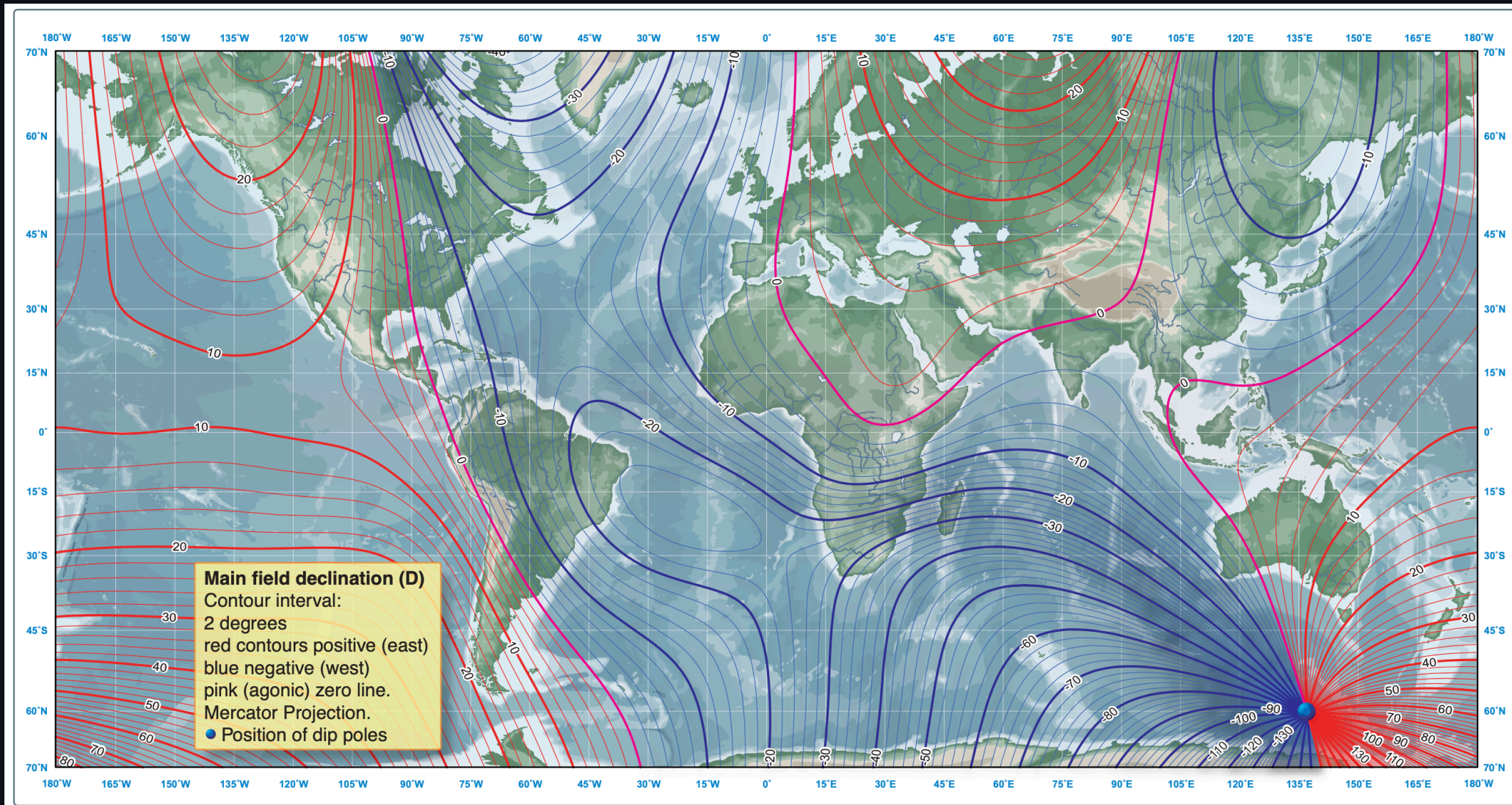




# Compass Errors and Variation

- Magnetic variation: Magnetic north vs true north
- Magnetic deviation: Magnetic field in an aircraft can
- Magnetic dip errors: North and south turning errors
- Acceleration errors: Accelerating on an east/west heading

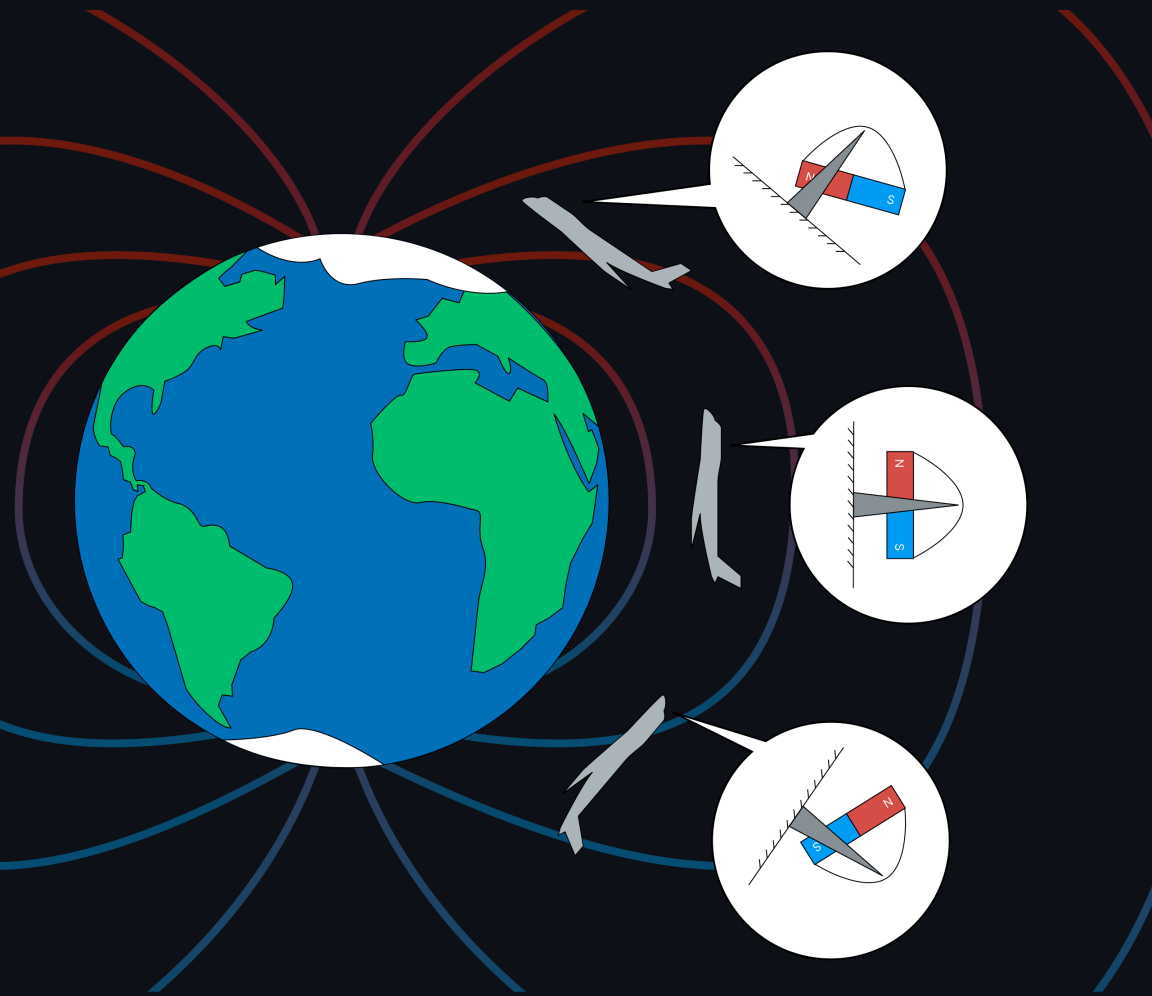
# Magnetic Variation



## Magnetic Deviation

For	N	030	060	E	120	150
Steer	005°	027°	063°	090°	122°	147°
For	S	210	240	W	300	330
Steer	176°	207°	237°	270°	308°	339°
Date	April 18, 2013					

- The magnetic field for various electronic/magnetic/metallic components in the airplane can skew the direction of the compass
- The compass correction card gives you calibration to account for this
- Compass correction cards are specific to each airplane

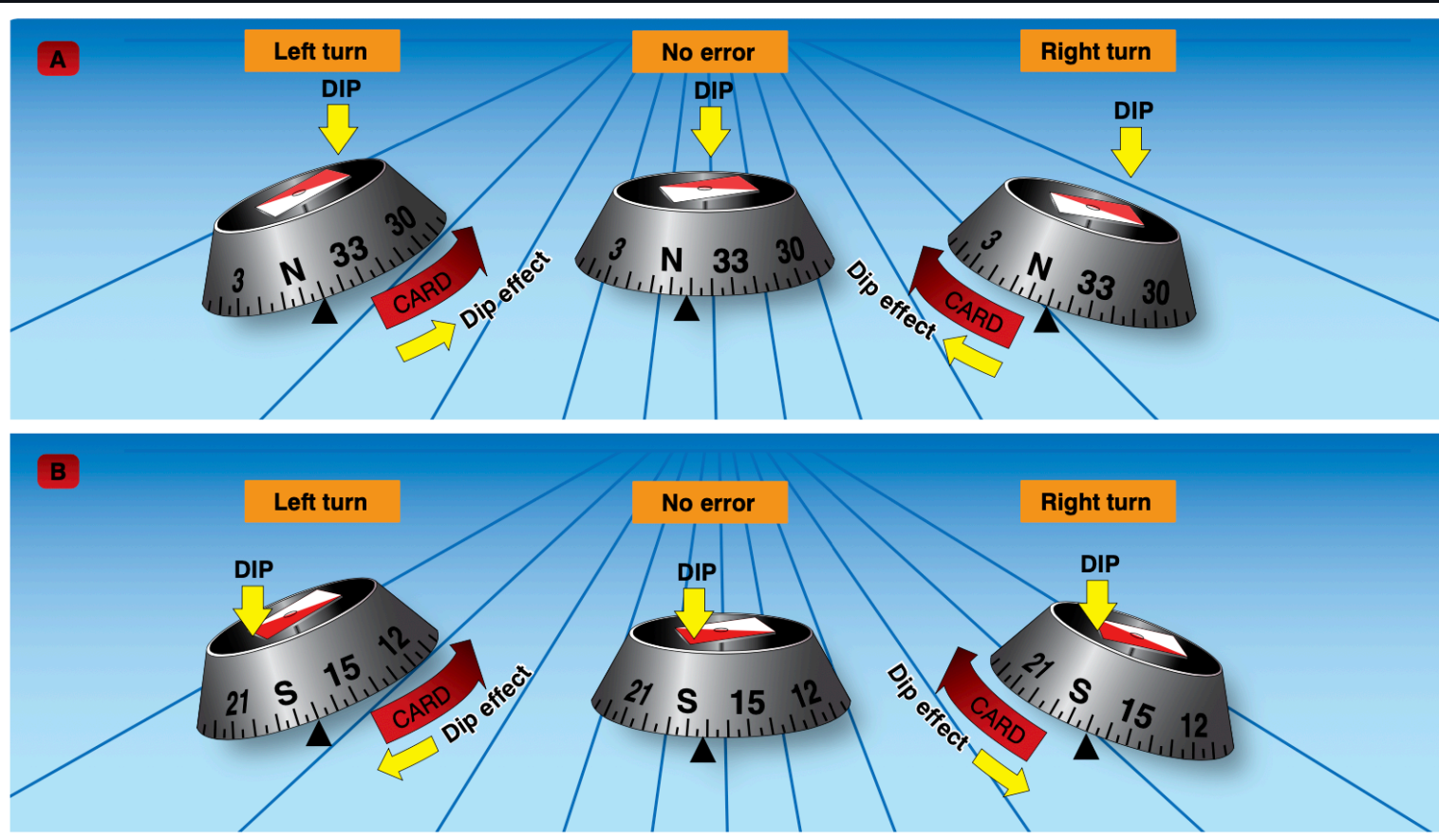


## Magnetic Dip

- As you get closer to the poles the vertical component of the magnetic field get stronger (and the horizontal component gets weaker)
- Compasses can compensate for this when they are level
- When they are tilted though, the results may be skew



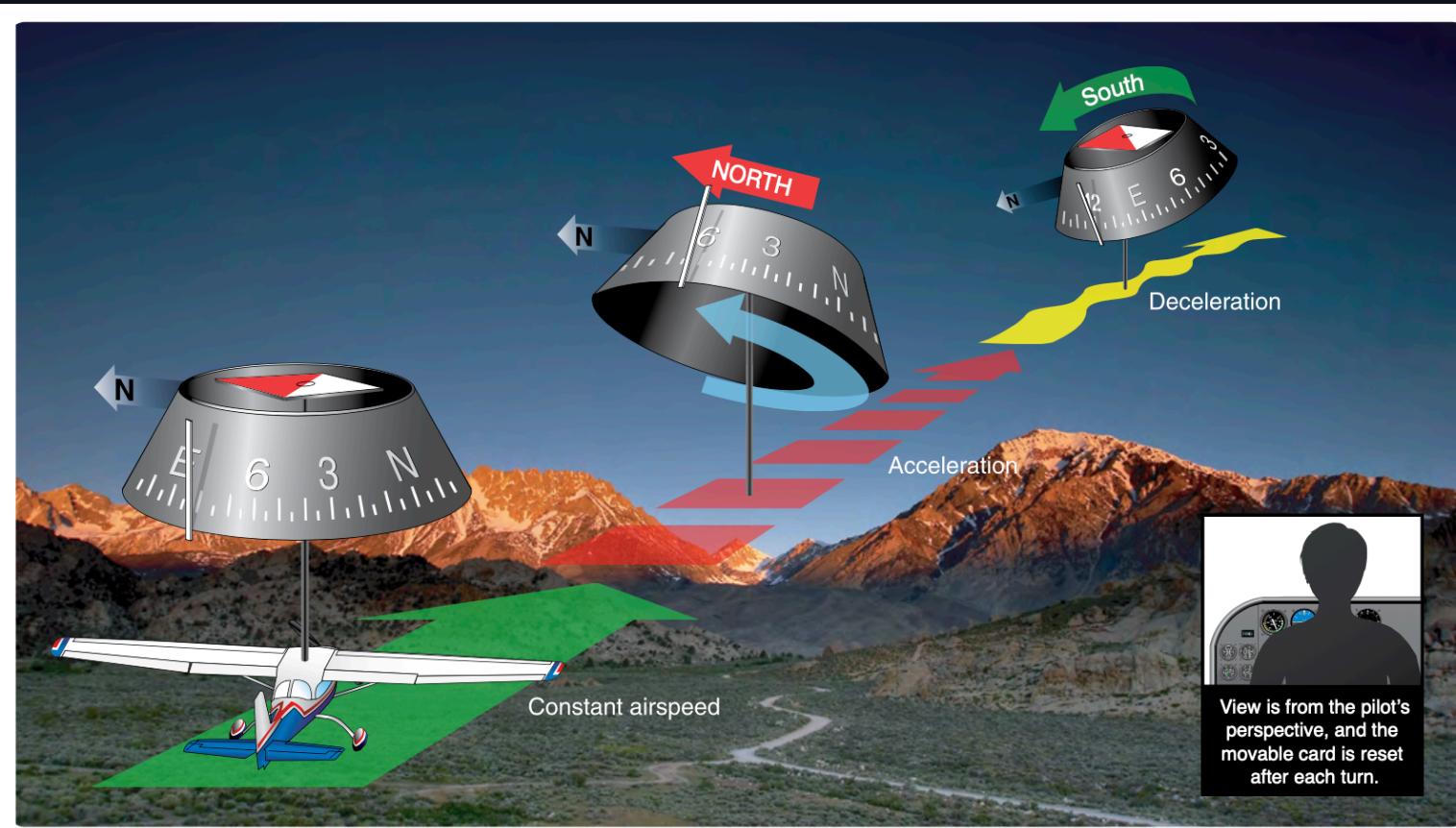
# Magnetic Dip Errors



- When in a turning through a N or S heading
- North: compass card leads actual heading
- South: compass card lags actual heading
- "UNOS"
  - Undershoot North
  - Overshoot South

# Acceleration Errors

- Compass card is not a uniform mass
  - It's a little heavier on the north side, to account for dip
- "ANDS"
  - Accelerate: North
  - Decelerate: South



## Getting an Accurate Compass Reading

- Straight and level, unaccelerated flight
- Account for deviation using the compass correction card
- Know when to use true headings vs magnetic headings
- Magnetometer-based (electronic flight displays) systems won't have these errors

# Summary

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## Knowledge Check

If you were to lose electrical power to the avionics bus in your airplane, which instruments would stop working?

## Knowledge Check

Flying in an airplane with a vacuum system, you notice that your heading indicator is starting to drift and the attitude indicator is leaning to the left. What might this indicate?

## Knowledge Check

You're turning to a heading a 360° N using the magnetic compass. How would you ensure you roll out right on your heading?