Most simulations of engine failure during training conclude after the flight instructor and student glide to a low but safe altitude and then evaluate whether the bid to reach the landing site would have succeededIf the simulation takes place over an airport, continuing the glide to touchdown adds a real-life dimension.

Simulations being what they are, some elements of forced landing procedures don't always get their due. For example, when an off-airport landing is imminent, what's to be done about your aircraft's flaps, fuel, and electrical systems? Should aircraft doors be opened before touchdown, or left alone? Be sure to review these procedural details, even if only by stating to your instructor what steps you would have taken.

One problem with making forced landings is that pilots may be unintentionally biased by their training. For safety reasons, instructors use a good field when practicing emergency landings. In the real world, Murphy's Law almost guarantees that an engine failure will occur at low altitude over inhospitable terrain. If pilots have been conditioned to think that a reasonable landing site is always available, they may not react appropriately in situations that have no reasonable alternatives.

There are many decisions to make. The forced landing without engine power checklist for a 1980 Cessna 152 has nine action items. Among them: placing the mixture in the idle cutoff position, shutting off fuel and ignition (to prevent a fire), and unlatching doors before landing. The electrical system? Don't shut it down until after final flaps have been set. On the glide, follow recommended airspeeds (65 KIAS flaps up, 60 KIAS flaps down in the Cessna 152).

What are the action items for the club planes you fly? Should you bother finding out? Maybe it will shave your life one day.