

More on Instruction©

An instructor should be looking ahead for the student. Certain skills require seasoning before proficiency can be acquired. When doing airwork I try to make the flights up-wind so that the return to the home field will be both closer and quicker. I recommend introducing radio procedures from the beginning. This is especially true for those communications that are essentially the same for every flight. There is no reason a student should not be rehearsed and allowed to make those communications for both departure and anticipated arrival. Personally I teach inter-airport communications, orientation, as part of the landing instruction.

While it may take longer for a student to solo through the process of utilizing multiple airports, once soloed, they are better able to use this prior experience to make inter-airport solo flights. Additionally, these flights provide a much larger target area made up familiar checkpoints and radio procedures for cross country flights and weather /terrain conditions.

Interestingly, there is some advantage for a student to learn to fly in aircraft which are subject to a variety of maintenance problems. I have been flying with a student who has been subjected to an endless variety of problems. Water in the intercom today, a bald tire, a low battery, a failed generator, and being unable to transmit on the radio. Each of these events has been a learning experience that is not likely to be experienced when flying newer aircraft. It is far better that these situations occur under experienced supervision. That most of these situations were discovered prior to takeoff is indicative of the importance of a careful preflight. Those that loccured in the air provided an instructional demonstration of procedures not otherwise easily created.

Flight in the vicinity of clouds, marginal conditions and turbulence is something to be looked for, not avoided. These kinds of experiences are best provided as practical instructional opportunities that are best not faced by a solo student or low time pilot. Flight in weather should be introduced in small increments but it should be introduced and perhaps supplemented with additional experiences. I have flown with any number of pilots who have had to experience weather, SVFR, and unfamiliar radio instructions when solo long after getting their licenses. This is one of the reasons I advocate beginning your flight training in the fall. Most pilots will have their licenses by spring. The full summer of nice flying weather is followed by weather which has been a part of their training. I believe that the reason so many pilots quit shortly after getting their licenses is because of their being uncomfortable with making weather flight decisions.

There will be occasions when weather or aircraft conditions make a lesson impractical. Extensive turbulence and radio problems are typical examples. The ethical instructor will be willing to cut the flight off and call it a day. The student with money should not be treated or taught any differently than the one who is without.

One of my phrases from teaching school is, "Pupils don't fail; only teachers do." I have found that the instructors choice of when and how to introduce and practice a given skill is very much the determining factor in student success. The progression to 'solo' is as varied as there are students. Skill, and judgment are the general factors but just as important is exposure to a wide variety

of situations. Reserve intellectual and emotional capacity can only be developed with controlled experiences. Safe flying and safe correction of errors is more to be sought than perfection. Competence and assurance that you have enough capacity left over to handle the unexpected is better than bravado.

Almost anyone can learn to fly safely. Flying well is reserved for the few. Those who cannot exercise sufficient judgment to fly safely should flat out be told to quit to save their lives. I have done so twice and only saved one life. Today I saw an instructor take off with a student in an aircraft that had a three inch bald spot with a fringe of nylon cord on the outer edges. This flight was made with full awareness of the potential hazard and in full view of competent witnesses. Instructors teach judgement as much by example as anything else. Exposure to situations that require judgmental decisions is part of any good instructional program.

For any flying situation there are many poor ways to perform, a number of good ways, a few better ways but only one best way. Unfortunately the nature of flight instruction is that the best way is usually an opinion left to the instructor. A given instructor's best way is usually the way he was taught. In a unique reversal of form the FAA has reneged on any accountability for determining just what constitutes good instruction.

As a free lance instructor I see specific advantages to being exposed to multiple instructors that will partially counter the intrinsic benefits of a single instructor. Students want and need explanations that come from different directions with a difference in emphasis. Some times a single instructor can offer this but it is more likely from multiple instructors.

CFI motivation is an important consideration. Money is usually the common motivator but not in flight instruction. There are too many available instructors for the supply of students. A career instructor should (must) have supplementary income in order to afford the career. As an industry, aviation does not have an affordable instructional program for the non-commercial level pilot. The general aviation pilot is usually being taught by a relatively low time instructor who is trying to fly his way out of instructing. To me, there seem to be fewer and fewer high time, old, and experienced instructors who have the most to teach.

Comments by others from the internet:

1. In my own education I have found that the part-time CFI, the one who teaches because he loves aviation and wants to share it, has been the > best, while the CFIs looking to "move up" the career ladder have been > the worst.
2. I always do my BFR/Wings with a different instructor for diversity reasons, and I can tell you I've flown with some very good Part 141 instructors (most who were younger than I was) and some real stinko part timers as well.
3. For me, personally, I was looking for someone who would be flexible in how he or she taught, able to work with some of the training I already had, and CFIs with other jobs who were inflexible, inexperienced, or

simply trying to fly as much as possible on someone else's dime. As well as the reverse.

4. Of course, all his education training is required is to memorize a few simple rote (and dated) theories for the FOI exam.

5. I prefer instructors with a wider range of experience than comm plus instruction hours.

6. I would ask around before selecting my instructor. The aviation community is usually small enough that any 'bad instructors' are identified quickly.

7. I have found that IMHO, the best instructors are those guys that fly or have flown either corporate or industrial aid. They usually have the widest experience of flying into bad strips, in bad weather and sometimes in broken aircraft. Provided that they can make the transition from do-er to teacher, they have a lot to teach.

8. I don't believe you're doing yourself a favor by "sticking it out" with an instructor you don't like.

9. I think this points up a problem in general aviation training. What other industry uses the most in-experienced to teach the novice?

10. Sometimes this means letting one learn a lesson (as opposed to ('teaching it") the hard way, and knowing when acquiring a skill just requires experience.

11. IMO, the first thing you should remember, is that the instructor is there for your benefit, A certain amount of discomfort is expected in the process of learning anything new, especially things that carry a lot of responsibility

12. But if your discomfort is such that you cannot say 'I learned something' or 'I enjoyed that lesson' after the lesson is done, you need to adjust something - either the pace, or (sometimes) you just need an instructor you are more comfortable with. Talk with him or her. Develop some trust and communication.

13. In short, learning to fly is, at times, uncomfortable. The end result, however, is very rewarding! And usually once you've accomplished each lesson, you can look back on it and see what you learned, and how much fun it really was.

14. A good and compatible instructor is a key ingredient - and even though one instructor may not be compatible, doesn't mean they're a bad instructor, and certainly has no reflection on you!

Selecting an instructor:

Criteria:

Flying background?

Why do you teach?

How busy are you now?

What is your success rate?

Teaching Program:

I want to see your syllabus.

How many lessons are needed in how much time?

Do you use lesson plans?
How flexible are your lessons?
How available are you?
What about ground school?
When should I take the written test?
How do you conduct a typical lesson?
How do you teach radio work?
How often should I fly?
what about cancelling?
Will I take phase checks?
What about my taking gliding or spin lessons?
What makes you distinct from other instructors?

Financial:

How many hours can I expect to take?
How do you charge? Interpersonal:
What's the most important thing you teach in flying?

!