
WHAT IS STICK-AND-RUDDER FLYING?

Master the art of flying by feeling

» By Rod Machado

WHAT IS STICK-AND-RUDDER flying, and how do you evaluate it? I was recently asked this by a flight instructor, and it's not one that I would expect all pilots to understand. A *stick-and-rudder pilot* flies his or her airplane primarily by looking outside

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the cockpit and paying attention to the physical sensations of flight. A *panel pilot* flies primarily by referencing the airspeed indicator, attitude indicator, and inclinometer, and pays very little attention to the physical sensations of flight. For example, when turning from base to final approach, a stick-and-rudder pilot estimates his

proximity to the stall/spin condition by using sight (his attitude and nose movement relative to airplane motion), sound (the sounds associated with higher angles of attack), and feel (control pressure, control response, uneven distribution

of pressure on the derriere, as well as G-loading). A panel pilot, however, evaluates his proximity to a stall primarily by emphasizing his airspeed reading and activation of the stall light/horn. He typically gauges the proper amount of rudder use by looking at the ball in the inclinometer. He considers himself immune from a stall

if the nose is pointed below the horizon, and he often fails to notice and respond to any uneven pressure on his derriere or sensation of increased G-loading.

There are several ways of evaluating a pilot's stick-and-rudder skills, but one of my favorites is to cover the airspeed indicator during pattern work (if you're not a stick-and-rudder instructor and/or feel uncomfortable doing this, then cover the indicator so that only you can see it). A stick-and-rudder pilot will have no problem at all taking off and landing without looking at the airspeed indicator. At first, panel pilots feel very uncomfortable with this exercise. With a few hours of stick-and-rudder training, they quickly gain basic stick-and-rudder skills—something every pilot should have. 🐼
