



# STUDENTS BEWARE

## YOU CAN RECOGNIZE PROPER INSTRUCTION

**T**his sad story triggered my anger, and anyone who is considering or engaged in flight training should take note.

I met with a man who had called me earlier regarding his concern about flying. He had just received his private pilot certificate, and actually said, "I have no confidence in my ability to fly safely." Whoa! That is incredibly disgusting.

After asking several questions, I identified some contributing factors: minimum ground instruction; no pre- or postflight briefings; excessive reliance on instrument reference; an unstructured training program; and a fear of stalls, spins, slow flight, and steep-banked turns.

After apologizing for my reaction, I told him that he was a victim of grossly substandard training, and I gave him some training material that I publish and several suggestions on how he could gain the proper level of self-confidence. That,

optimism, awareness, risk management, resource utilization, and personal limitations. It requires the study and mastery of regulatory and procedural material and subjects that involve mechanics, mathematics, and science.

I give students a comprehensive training syllabus that clearly defines the steps and objectives for the three phases of private pilot training—initial solo, solo cross-country flying, and preparation for FAA certification. During each flight, I continually watch for student appre-

### **JUST LEARNING TO CONTROL THE AIRPLANE. IT INVOLVES ELEMENTS THAT OFTEN DIFFER FROM ONE'S EARTHBOUND THINKING AND PERFORMANCE.**

however, would require more sessions with a competent instructor.

He thanked me, and left. Unfortunately, his demeanor gave me the feeling that he might walk away from flying. That would be terribly unfortunate.

Here are some essential elements for aviation training that any novice can easily recognize. First and foremost is enjoyment. Nothing that I have ever done comes remotely close to the sheer joy of flying, which I have been doing for more than 50 years. I always convey that to students at our first meeting and during most flights.

I emphasize that flight training involves more than just learning to control the airplane. It involves elements that often differ from one's Earthbound thinking and performance—the proper use of all physical senses and mental processes to include the importance of pessimism over

hension or uneasiness. If that occurs, I immediately take steps to eliminate it. Fear with respect to flight training indicates a lack of proper knowledge.

I concentrate on seemingly simple basic concepts until they become habitual. One essential element of proper flight training is the development of mental and physical habit patterns, because the proper level of self confidence will never be obtained unless a student can perform all requirements habitually. In other words, instead of having to concentrate on the current task, the student can perform that task properly and simultaneously cope with the many distractions that inevitably occur while flying.

I make certain that students have a satisfactory plan for ground training. That can be a traditional ground school, a computer-based training program,

or the publications required for proper self-study. I use the preflight briefing to discuss the previous study assignment, and we do not fly unless the student completes that assignment, correctly describes the basic concepts, and knows exactly what we'll be doing in the airplane. No surprises—never, ever.

I rely on both the telling-and-doing technique of flight instruction and the review process: Instructor tells, instructor does. Student tells, instructor does. Student tells, student does. Student does, instructor evaluates. On most flights I review tasks that were performed on a previous flight. When a student displays proper performance on three separate flights, he or she has mastered that task—the correct habit patterns have been established.

I minimize conversation when flying and take notes that will be covered during the postflight briefing. I let students practice quietly, hoping that they will recognize errors on their own. If not, I make certain that they know why those errors occurred. I change a cockpit control or take the flight controls only when I'm demonstrating a maneuver or when flight safety is a concern.

Flight training should be a rewarding, self-satisfying endeavor. I always say that a private pilot certificate is the best bargain in the United States. Yes, it involves expense, and there are learning plateaus—but if you take it one step at a time, you'll achieve your goal sooner than you think. Your first flight as a private pilot will make it all worthwhile.

Most flight instructors do as I do. If that is not the case for you, change instructors and avoid the dilemma of the man I met. With proper training, your self-confidence will let you truly enjoy the art of flying. 🗣️

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🌐 Visit his website ([www.skyroamers.com](http://www.skyroamers.com)).