

FIELD GUIDE TO FLIGHT TRAINING

Flight Students

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“Science,
beauty,
freedom,
adventure.
What more
could you
ask of life?”

-CHARLES A. LINDBERGH, AVIATOR

INTRODUCTION

An airplane flies overhead and you can't help but look up and think, "I wish I could do that." You drive by your local airport just as a small plane takes off or lands. "That sure looks like fun" runs through your mind.

People are drawn to flying for many reasons. For some, it's the challenge. Perhaps it's the first step toward a career as a professional pilot. For others, it may be a pathway to more exciting vacations or a tool for business.

Or, maybe it's just something you always wanted to do.

Now it's time to start taking action. This book will act as a guide as you take your first steps toward becoming a pilot. It will provide you with a set of tools to help you make the most of your flight training experience—from setting a budget to choosing a flight instructor—and help you turn your dreams into reality.

And, as an AOPA member, you'll have free access to the [AOPA Flight Training Advantage \(AFTA\) training platform](#). With AFTA, you and your instructor can easily track your progress, save you time and money, and keep you focused on your goal of becoming a private pilot!



AOPA
FLIGHT TRAINING
ADVANTAGE

A Cost-Effective Way to Train for Your Initial Pilot Certificate

- Lesson plans adapt to you & your progress
- Know what to expect & how to prepare for each lesson
- Track lesson history, including scores, notes & feedback
- And much more

Sign up or learn more at aopa.org/afta

YOU CAN FLY
FLIGHT TRAINING

AFTA is free to AOPA members. Free trial for non-members.

If your school or CFI is not using AFTA, ask them to!
Send them to aopa.org/afta



HEADS. HANDS. HEART.

BEGIN YOUR FLIGHT TRAINING JOURNEY

Flight training will enrich your life in countless ways. You'll learn new skills that open up entirely new horizons—literally! You'll also make new friends and meet interesting people with different backgrounds. And, what do you all have in common? A love of aviation!

Through the course of your training, you'll also develop a close relationship with your flight instructor -your personal guide into the world of aviation.

There are many reasons to become a pilot -but each journey is unique. So, keep reading. This booklet contains lots of great suggestions, tips, and information. With it, you can make informed decisions and approach your training with a clear purpose.

“When once you
have tasted flight,
you will forever
walk the earth
with your eyes
turned skyward,
for there you
have been, and
there you will
always long
to return.”

-LEONARDO DAVINCI, INVENTOR

WORKSHEET

MOTIVATIONS & SKILLS

People choose to fly for many reasons. Use this worksheet to reflect on your motivations for becoming a pilot. As you continue through your flight training program, this sheet will serve as a reminder of why you first decided to pursue your dream, and help you keep sight of your training goals. This is a good resource to share with your instructor so he/she can tailor your training.

WHY FLY?

I WANT TO FLY SO I CAN...

- Experience the world from a new vantage point.
- Fly loops and rolls.
- Conquer my fear of heights.
- Begin a career in aviation.
- Enhance or build my business.
- Fulfill a childhood dream.
- Prove to myself that I can.
- Meet new people, visit new places.
- Serve my community.
-
-

I'M MOST EXCITED ABOUT...

- Every takeoff. Every landing.
- The stories I will tell my family and friends.
- The first flight when the instructor doesn't touch the controls.
- My first solo flight.
- The day I hold my pilot certificate in my hand.
-
-

WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY PILOT CERTIFICATE?

It's never too early to start exploring ways you can engage with aviation once you've completed your flight certification. Mark the areas below that interest you.

- Plan a weekend getaway with my family—to the beach, the mountains, or a city I've been wanting to explore.
- Participate in fly out events and meet up with pilots at a neighboring airport.
- Go out for lunch at an airport restaurant a few towns away.

SECTION 1 | THE FLIGHT TRAINING JOURNEY

- Earn my Instrument Rating so I can fly in low visibility and cloud cover.
- Continue my flight training to eventually become a flight instructor or commercial pilot.
- Leverage travel freedom to enhance my business

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

-
-
-

SKILLS & KNOW-HOW

Here are just a few of the skills you can learn as a part of flight training. Which ones are you excited about?

- Mathematical reasoning
- Spatial awareness
- Situational awareness
- Communicating with air traffic control
- Expertise in aviation standards and regulations
- Science, physics, and engineering knowledge
- Mechanical proficiency
- Attention to detail
- Troubleshooting
- Critical thinking
- Contingency planning
- Ability to see the big picture
- Understanding of aviation acronyms and alphabet

FLIGHTS OF PASSAGE

Your flight training journey, from start to finish

IN THE AIR

ON THE GROUND



Learn to Fly

You'll be taking the controls from Day 1. In fact, it's not uncommon to take off, fly, and even land the airplane during your introductory flight lesson.



Solo Flight

During the first solo flight, students typically perform three takeoffs and landings, while the instructor watches from the ground. This is an exciting accomplishment that showcases all the hard work and training you've done up to this point.



Learn Practice Study

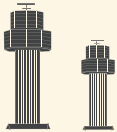
You will start building your aviation knowledge during the first part of your training experience. As you learn new skills and theories, it's helpful to review these techniques frequently, and bring them into your flight training practice.



Student Pilot Certificate (Medical Exam)

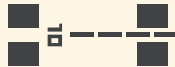
As a prerequisite for solo flight, students pursuing a private pilot certificate must hold a Student Pilot Certificate and at least a 3rd Class medical certificate. Students pursuing a sport pilot certificate don't need to pass the medical exam.

See Appendix on page 58 for more information



Fly to Other Airports (Cross-Country)

Often referred to as "cross country" flight, you will learn how to navigate to, communicate with, and land at other airports as a part of your flight training.



Practice Flying Maneuvers & Landing

Once you have done your solo and cross-country flights, you'll spend time practicing your maneuvers in preparation for your checkride. During this time, your flights will be a mix of solos and flight lessons with your instructor



Simulator Use

Simulators can help you practice your training skills and techniques on the ground—whether you use a computer program at home or a simulator at your flight school.



Written Exam

Once you've completed your ground school training, you will take the "written" test—a computer-based multiple choice exam created by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). It will test your knowledge of the theories covered in ground school.




Checkride (Practical Test)

The "checkride" is an oral and practical test of your aviation skills—and it brings together elements from every aspect of your training. During your checkride you'll fly with an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE) who will measure your skills against the Airman Certification Standards for pilot certification. In addition to observing your technique as a pilot, the examiner will ask you questions to evaluate your knowledge of aviation theory.



Go Explore, Keep Learning

Pilot certification is just the beginning of your journey as an aviator. Whether you continue your training to earn other ratings and certificates or share your passion for flying with friends and family, there are countless ways to engage with aviation beyond your initial training.



“To most people,
the sky is the
limit. To those
who love
aviation, the
sky is home.”

-ANONYMOUS

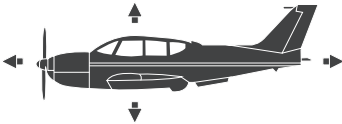
THE INTRODUCTORY FLIGHT

No matter how far aviation takes you, your introductory flight will remain a treasured memory. The intro flight is a brief but comprehensive introduction to the complete experience of a flight lesson. Your flight instructor will give you an overview of preparatory steps, such as checking the weather and performing a preflight inspection of the aircraft you will fly. Since training aircraft are equipped with

dual controls, you will be a participant from start to finish. You'll get a taste of the fundamentals of flying—not to mention an incomparable view of your local area. And you'll have an amazing answer to the question, "What did you do today?"

WHO WILL HELP ME?

YOUR FLIGHT TRAINING GUIDES, GROUPS,
AND GROUND SUPPORT



FLIGHT SCHOOLS & FLYING CLUBS

Your flight school or flying club is the nerve center of the flight training experience. It's a place to ask questions, give and get feedback, and learn about the long-term experiences and costs of your flight training. It's also the perfect place to take a curious family member or friend who wants to know more about your flight training.



FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS

Your flight instructor is your go-to person for any questions pertaining to your particular flight training program. A good instructor ensures that you gain hands-on experience in the air, makes you feel safe, and encourages you to be honest about your particular challenges and passions. Using one instructor for your training maintains consistency, but using multiple instructors allows for schedule flexibility and broadened resources.



OTHER FLIGHT STUDENTS

Your fellow flight students can be a valuable resource and support throughout your training. Ask your instructor or flight school to introduce you to some of their other students. Whether you ask for advice from someone further along in training, trade stories or compare logbooks, it's always inspiring to find a group of pilot friends who also have the aviation bug.



PILOTS

Connecting with other pilots is a great way to engage with the aviation community, get a sense of where you can go with your pilot certificate, and garner wisdom from those who have logged many hours in the air. Don't hesitate to join a pilot association or approach your fellow pilots at hangar events, airport days or even around the airport.



FRIENDS & FAMILY

Your friends and family play an important role in your flight training experience because they act as a natural support system as you challenge yourself in new ways. Even if they don't understand the technicalities of flight training, include your friends and family in the conversation by sharing photos and experiences. Once you feel comfortable, you can even invite them along for a training flight. Share your passion and progress with your friends and family—in person, online, and any other way you see fit.

HOW MUCH WILL FLIGHT TRAINING COST?

Many variables affect the cost of learning to fly, including the frequency of flight lessons, weather conditions, where you fly, your training aircraft, and individual aptitude. The cost of earning your certificate can vary greatly, depending on whether you choose to pursue sport, recreational, or private pilot training. ([See page 19](#) for an overview of each of these certificates.)

If you fly more often (multiple times per week, or more), you'll actually end up spending less money on your flight training. Typically, when you consistently reinforce your training, you don't have to spend air time re-learning skills or techniques. Instead, you can continue to move forward and make the most of every moment in flight.

CALCULATING HOURS

Total hours in flight refers to the amount of time that you spend in the airplane with the propeller spinning. Remember that you will spend time on the ground during each lesson with your instructor. This time will be spent prepping the plane, covering new flight training theories, and reviewing material.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Instructor and airplane costs vary depending on where you are located. Check with local flight schools to get an estimate of airplane rental and instructor rates, and calculate your budget accordingly.

FOR A LIST OF FLIGHT SCHOOLS AND FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS NEAR YOU, [CLICK HERE](#)

MAKE AN ESTIMATE

Use this formula to calculate your flight training cost. Don't hesitate to ask your flight school or instructor for an estimate.

Remember, often your instructor will cover important skills and techniques on the ground before and after each flight. Most instructors include this time—as well as time in the air—when calculating their billable hours.

$$\begin{array}{rcc}
 \text{TOTAL HOURS IN FLIGHT} & \times & \text{AIRPLANE RATE} \\
 & & + \\
 \text{TOTAL HOURS WITH INSTRUCTOR} & \times & \text{INTSTRUCTOR RATE} \\
 & & = \\
 & & \text{***FLIGHT TRAINING COST}
 \end{array}$$

BUILD YOUR BUDGET

Set aside room in your budget for these additional flight training costs.

Examiner and test fees

Books and resources

Aviation headset

Renter's Insurance (recommended even if the school doesn't require it!)

Simulator practice costs

The AOPA Flight Training Advantage app (AFTA) will save you money. It's free to AOPA members. For more information, [click here](#).

For renter insurance information, [click here](#).

*****IMPORTANT:** *These are just estimates. There are many factors such as weather issues that can affect your final cost.*

CAUTION! *Beware of flight schools the guarantee a fixed cost for your certificate. Be sure to ask if there are additional costs should it require more time than they say it will to complete your training*

WHAT TYPES OF SCHOOLS CAN I CHOOSE FROM?

As a flight student, you can choose from two types of flight schools:

PART 61 & PART 141

These names refer to the parts of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) under which the schools operate.

The most relevant differences between the two are structure and FAA oversight.

Part 61 flight schools and independent flight instructors do not have the same paperwork requirements and FAA oversight as Part 141 schools. Learning at a Part 61 school can give students the flexibility to adapt flying lesson content and sequence to meet their needs. For this reason, many part-time students choose to enroll in Part 61 schools.

Part 141 flight schools are periodically audited by the FAA, must have detailed FAA-approved course outlines, and are required to meet student pilot performance standards. Part 141 schools might be better for you if you prefer a more structured environment or want to fly professionally.

The most commonly mentioned (but least important) distinction between the two is the minimum flight time required for the private pilot certificate—40 hours under Part 61, and 35 hours under Part 141. However, considering that the national average for earning a private pilot certificate is 60-75 flight hours, this difference isn't the most important factor for choosing a school.

Your choice of flight school depends on your goals, personal preferences, available time, location, and other factors that fit your specific needs.

WHAT TYPES OF CERTIFICATES CAN I EARN?

PRIVATE

Most flight students in the United States earn a traditional private pilot certificate. This is often referred to as “having your private.” It has the fewest limitations and, with additional training, can be upgraded to include more advanced capabilities such as flying through clouds, flying an airplane with two or more engines, or flying professionally. The minimum flight time requirement to be eligible for a private pilot certificate is 40 flight hours. Most students fly 60-75 hours before testing.

RECREATIONAL

The recreational pilot certificate is a more limited form of the private certificate. It’s a great way to earn your wings if you’ll be flying close to your home airport during the day with no more than one passenger. It requires less time and money to earn than the private. Most people who start down this path eventually go on to earn the private certificate. If you become a recreational pilot, additional training and experience will allow you to easily upgrade to a private pilot certificate. The minimum flight time required to be eligible for a recreational certificate is 30 hours. Like the private certificate, most students budget for more hours of flight training time.

SPORT

The sport pilot certificate is perfect for people who want to get back to—or start with—the basics of flying. Sport pilots can fly a specific limited class of aircraft known as light sport aircraft (LSA). These are smaller, lighter, less complex, one- or two-seat airplanes. Sport pilots are not required to have medical certificates. The Sport Pilot certificate comes with some limitations but, with additional training and a medical certificate, you can easily upgrade to less restrictive certificates. The minimum flight time required to be eligible for a Sport Pilot certificate is 20 hours but, as with both Private and Recreational certificates, most students budget for more hours of flight training time.

CHART YOUR TRAJECTORY

SET YOUR PLANS IN MOTION

Now that you have a sense of what the flight training journey entails, it's time to set your plans in motion. Use the worksheets in this section to get a sense of a training style that works for you, organize your training schedule, and begin to share your flight training experience with friends and family.

WORKSHEET

IDENTIFYING YOUR LEARNING STYLE

Learning any new skill requires dedication and training. Aviation is no different. As you progress, you'll develop the confidence, knowledge, and self-discipline required of a successful pilot.

Take a moment to think about your work habits and learning style, so you can tackle your training in a manner that's most effective for you.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Are you better at working in a group or alone? Do you prefer to work at your own pace, or do you like having a set schedule when you learn new information? How do you best receive information?

Think about the last time you learned a new skill—whether it was a computer program for work or the best method for grilling a steak. Write about your learning experience below. Share this sheet with your instructor as a conversation-starter about your preferred learning methods.

THE LAST NEW SKILL I LEARNED WAS

How did you learn this skill?

Did you enjoy learning in this way? Why?

What resources do you wish you had access to during this experience?

BE HONEST

Be honest with yourself about your schedule and limitations—and then focus on areas where you can make small changes to fit aviation into your life. Maybe you plan mid-week flight lessons one evening a week. Maybe you devote 30 minutes of your TV time to studying course material instead. Whatever you do, remember that all of these small changes accomplish a much larger dream.

Write down some small ways you can fit aviation into your life.

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.....

.....

SHARE THE EXPERIENCE

Tell your friends and family about your flight training goals and experiences. Announcing your milestones to the world will help keep you accountable and motivate you.

Write down the names of people you'd like to share this experience with—or tell your entire social media network.

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START IT OFF RIGHT

Take a look at your weekly schedule and find a consistent time that will work for your flight training lessons. (It's often possible to schedule morning or evening lessons during the week.)

Discuss this plan with your family or significant other. Once you've chosen a good time for your training, share your calendar with your flight instructor to ensure that your schedules line up. Keep in mind that the weather will constantly play a factor in your ability to fly. It's often a good idea to schedule additional flight lessons, knowing that sometimes you'll be "weathered out" and will have to cancel a flight.

PLAN AHEAD

Be mindful of upcoming events or time commitments that might interfere with your flight training, and think about how you can plan around these commitments.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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.....

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.....

INTRODUCTORY FLIGHT SCHEDULED FOR

SECTION 2 | SET YOUR PLANS IN MOTION

SAT	SUN			
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI

SAFETY STANDARDS

General Aviation—defined as all kinds of flying other than airline and military—is a safe and convenient way to travel. Training for a pilot certificate is much more rigorous than it is for a driver’s license. Mandatory ground and flight training, along with written and practical tests, ensure pilots have achieved a basic level of proficiency. Periodic mandatory recurrent training helps maintain and improve skills so pilots are safe in the air.



MONEY MATTERS

“When I came back to flying after 38 years, I had some money set aside and I had a plan. First the knowledge test. If I wouldn’t study for that this time around, no flying. After I passed the test, I searched diligently for the cheapest plane in my area—a Cessna 152. (Thankfully, the plane is owned by one of the best CFIs in town!) **I use flight simulator software between lessons to practice whatever I’m learning.**”

-REGINA COKER

“I budget a certain amount monthly. This enables me to complete my private pilot certificate in whatever time it takes, and **allows me to continue flying** thereafter.”

-BRETT SPRINGALL

WORKSHEET

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

You'll finish your flight training with more than a pilot certificate. You'll have a greater understanding of yourself and your capabilities. This is because flight training challenges and inspires each student in a different way.

Take a minute to explore the areas in which you'd like to grow through flight training. Which of the challenges below resonate with you? Mark the areas you'd like to focus on, and then share this sheet with your flight instructor or flight school operator.

- I'm concerned about the amount of time flight training takes.
- I'm worried about the cost of flight training.
- Heights make me nervous.
- I think I might make a mistake or get lost when I'm flying.
- I'm nervous about speaking on the radio.
- Math isn't my strongest suit.
- I'm concerned that I won't be able to finish training once I start.
- I'm afraid of flying.
-
-

IS IT SAFE?

Flying is safe. Today's airplanes are remarkably reliable and must be maintained under stringent FAA guidelines. However, it is not risk-free. Over the course of your training, your flight instructor will introduce you to "emergency" and "abnormal" in-flight scenarios to ensure that you are well-equipped to handle such things.

“My favorite aviation activity is planning for a cross-country flight. It covers all aspects of flight, from **the romantic daydreaming of where you want to fly**, to the practical calculations of fuel, distance, and aircraft performance. It takes you out of your comfort zone; it forces you to plan ahead, work with other pilots in unfamiliar airspace, and each flight is truly an adventure.”

-AMELIA ROSE EARHART

MEET YOUR MATCH

CHOOSING A FLIGHT SCHOOL AND INSTRUCTOR
THAT WORK FOR YOU

As a student, you have control over two of the most important factors in your flight training experience: you get to choose your flight school and flight instructor.

Where you learn plays an important role in your overall training experience, satisfaction, and success as a pilot. Like any major investment, the best way to make an informed decision is by doing some comparison shopping.

Whether you choose to learn from an independent flight instructor at your local airport or an instructor at a flight school, your search should involve the same array of questions. The worksheets in this section are designed to help you choose a school and an instructor that are right for you.

“A mile of
road will
take you
a mile, but
a mile of
runway can
take you
anywhere.”

-ANONYMOUS

HOW TO USE THESE WORKSHEETS

ENGAGE, YOUR WAY

Depending on where you live, you might have many options for flight training—or just a few. No matter what your situation is, make sure you investigate your options.

CHOOSE WISELY

In addition to assessing your instructor's experience, it's important to get a sense of his or her passions, technique, and instructor philosophy. Through this process of careful comparison, you can select someone who matches your personality, as well as your needs.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

It's okay if a school or instructor doesn't fulfill every single requirement or checkbox. By using these worksheets you'll know what to ask, understand how to compare your options, and learn what matters most to you.

KEEP IT OPEN

As you continue through your training, you can change instructors, and even schools, if you feel that you're not getting what you need from your training.

LOOKING FOR A LIST OF FLIGHT SCHOOLS NEAR YOU, VISIT OUR [FLIGHT SCHOOL FINDER](#) TO START YOUR SEARCH

CHOOSING A FLIGHT SCHOOL 1

AIRPORT	LOCATION	DISTANCE FROM HOME
.....

TIMING & COSTS

How many hours does it usually take to complete flight training at your school?

What is the estimated cost of completing pilot certification?

Is this estimate based on FAA minimum hours or your school's average?

How many flight instructors does your school have?	Can you tell me about their experience and personalities?
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INSTRUCTOR NAME	NOTES
.....
.....
.....

What is your school's 1st time pass rate?

Does your school offer any new pilot discounts or deals?

Can I ride along to observe other flight students' training?

.....

Does your school have any events or programs to help connect me with other students who are also completing their flight training?

.....

.....

Will I be able to meet with my Designated Pilot Examiner prior to my checkride? Y | N

LEARNING RESOURCES

Does your school have any online learning resources?.....

What are they?.....

If not, can you suggest helpful online (or other) resources? Y | N

Do you provide your students with practice knowledge tests? Y | N

Can I take my computer-based FAA Knowledge Test here? Y | N

Are these tests included in the cost of my flight training? Y | N

Do you offer ground school classes? Y | N

Are there any group discounts or price reductions? Y | N

Do you have a flight simulator? Y | N

How much does it cost to train in the simulator?

What kind of airplanes will I be able to fly as a student?

Do you offer the choice of analog gauges or glass cockpits?.....

May I take a look at your fleet?

How do you track my progress?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this easy. [click here](#)

Do you provide doctor lists and resources to help me obtain my medical certificate? Y | N

*(See Page 52 for an **Important Tip** regarding medical exams!)*

SCHEDULING & FLEXIBILITY

What hours are your instructors available?.....

Do you offer a variety of scheduling options? Y | N

Do you schedule students in advance? Y | N

How does the scheduling process work?

CHOOSING A FLIGHT SCHOOL 2

AIRPORT	LOCATION	DISTANCE FROM HOME
.....

TIMING & COSTS

How many hours does it usually take to complete flight training at your school?

What is the estimated cost of completing pilot certification?

Is this estimate based on FAA minimum hours or your school's average?

How many flight instructors does your school have?	Can you tell me about their experience and personalities?
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INSTRUCTOR NAME	NOTES
.....
.....
.....

What is your school's 1st time pass rate?

Does your school offer any new pilot discounts or deals?

Can I ride along to observe other flight students' training?

Does your school have any events or programs to help connect me with other students who are also completing their flight training?

Will I be able to meet with my Designated Pilot Examiner prior to my checkride? Y | N

LEARNING RESOURCES

Does your school have any online learning resources?.....

What are they?.....

If not, can you suggest helpful online (or other) resources? Y | N

Do you provide your students with practice knowledge tests? Y | N

Can I take my computer-based FAA Knowledge Test here? Y | N

Are these tests included in the cost of my flight training? Y | N

Do you offer ground school classes? Y | N

Are there any group discounts or price reductions? Y | N

Do you have a flight simulator? Y | N

How much does it cost to train in the simulator?

What kind of airplanes will I be able to fly as a student?

Do you offer the choice of analog gauges or glass cockpits?.....

May I take a look at your fleet?

How do you track my progress?

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Do you provide doctor lists and resources to help me obtain my medical certificate? Y | N

*(See Page 52 for an **Important Tip** regarding medical exams!)*

SCHEDULING & FLEXIBILITY

What hours are your instructors available?.....

Do you offer a variety of scheduling options? Y | N

Do you schedule students in advance? Y | N

How does the scheduling process work?

CHOOSING A FLIGHT SCHOOL 3

AIRPORT	LOCATION	DISTANCE FROM HOME
.....

TIMING & COSTS

How many hours does it usually take to complete flight training at your school?

What is the estimated cost of completing pilot certification?

Is this estimate based on FAA minimum hours or your school's average?

How many flight instructors does your school have?	Can you tell me about their experience and personalities?
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INSTRUCTOR NAME	NOTES
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.....
.....

What is your school's 1st time pass rate?

Does your school offer any new pilot discounts or deals?

Can I ride along to observe other flight students' training?

Does your school have any events or programs to help connect me with other students who are also completing their flight training?

Will I be able to meet with my Designated Pilot Examiner prior to my checkride? Y | N

LEARNING RESOURCES

Does your school have any online learning resources?.....

What are they?.....

If not, can you suggest helpful online (or other) resources? Y | N

Do you provide your students with practice knowledge tests? Y | N

Can I take my computer-based FAA Knowledge Test here? Y | N

Are these tests included in the cost of my flight training? Y | N

Do you offer ground school classes? Y | N

Are there any group discounts or price reductions? Y | N

Do you have a flight simulator? Y | N

How much does it cost to train in the simulator?

What kind of airplanes will I be able to fly as a student?

Do you offer the choice of analog gauges or glass cockpits?.....

May I take a look at your fleet?

How do you track my progress?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this easy. [click here](#)

Do you provide doctor lists and resources
to help me obtain my medical certificate? Y | N

*(See Page 52 for an **Important Tip** regarding medical exams!)*

SCHEDULING & FLEXIBILITY

What hours are your instructors available?.....

Do you offer a variety of scheduling options? Y | N

Do you schedule students in advance? Y | N

How does the scheduling process work?

WHEN YOU VISIT

- Talk to other students at the airport who are in the midst of their flight training. Ask them about what they like or find valuable at that particular school, and have them explain how the flight school helped them deal with problems or challenges in their training.
- Chat with people around the airport and get a sense of the school's atmosphere and philosophy. Like people, flight schools have personalities, and it's important that you choose one that works with yours.

NOTES

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CHOOSING A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR 1

NAME	FLIGHT SCHOOL	AIRPORT
.....

EXPERIENCE & AVAILABILITY

What days and hours are you available for instruction?.....

How long have you been flying and what are your goals as an instructor?

What types of flying are you excited about?.....

How long have you been an instructor?.....

How many of your students have completed their pilot certification?.....%

How many students are you currently instructing?

ORGANIZATION & EFFICIENCY

Do you follow a syllabus?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this a snap. [click here](#)

How will I know what comes next in my flight training?.....

How will my time in the air be spent?.....

Do you offer ground instruction for skills that I can learn when I'm not in flight?.....

In what areas will we be flying on my training flights?.....

Is it possible to fly different routes throughout the course of my training?.....

Can you suggest any flight planners or websites that might be useful to me throughout my flight training?.....

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

How have you helped personalize your instruction for other students you've taught?.....

.....

I am really interested in *[part of flight training]*.....

Is it possible for you to personalize your instruction to help me focus more on this? Y | N

How would you do this?.....

When are you available to answer questions between lessons?.....

Do you ever hold "office hours" when I can drop by to discuss my flight training? Y | N

What are the different milestones I can look forward to in my flight training?.....

Do you usually teach in glass cockpits or traditional cockpits?

Will I have the opportunity to choose which one I learn in?

What is your 1st time pass rate?

How will you track my progress?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this a snap. [click here](#)

SAFETY & PREPARATION

How safe is it to fly?.....

Do you have any particular methods for ensuring that every flight is safe?.....

I've heard a lot about the Airman Certification Standards and the checkride. What does that entail?.....

How will you help prepare me for this?.....

FOLLOW UP

How can I get in touch with you if I have more questions?

EMAIL

PHONE NUMBER

.....

.....

CHOOSING A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR 2

NAME	FLIGHT SCHOOL	AIRPORT
.....

EXPERIENCE & AVAILABILITY

What days and hours are you available for instruction?.....

How long have you been flying and what are your goals as an instructor?

What types of flying are you excited about?.....

How long have you been an instructor?.....

How many of your students have completed their pilot certification?.....%

How many students are you currently instructing?

ORGANIZATION & EFFICIENCY

Do you follow a syllabus?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this a snap. [click here](#)

How will I know what comes next in my flight training?.....

How will my time in the air be spent?.....

Do you offer ground instruction for skills that I can learn when I'm not in flight?.....

In what areas will we be flying on my training flights?.....

Is it possible to fly different routes throughout the course of my training?.....

Can you suggest any flight planners or websites that might be useful to me throughout my flight training?.....

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

How have you helped personalize your instruction for other students you’ve taught?.....

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I am really interested in *[part of flight training]*.....

Is it possible for you to personalize your instruction to help me focus more on this? Y | N

How would you do this?.....

When are you available to answer questions between lessons?.....

Do you ever hold “office hours” when I can drop by to discuss my flight training? Y | N

What are the different milestones I can look forward to in my flight training?.....

Do you usually teach in glass cockpits or traditional cockpits?

Will I have the opportunity to choose which one I learn in?

What is your 1st time pass rate?

How will you track my progress?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this a snap. [click here](#)

SAFETY & PREPARATION

How safe is it to fly?.....

Do you have any particular methods for ensuring that every flight is safe?.....

I’ve heard a lot about the Airman Certification Standards and the checkride. What does that entail?.....

How will you help prepare me for this?.....

FOLLOW UP

How can I get in touch with you if I have more questions?

EMAIL

PHONE NUMBER

.....

.....

CHOOSING A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR 3

NAME	FLIGHT SCHOOL	AIRPORT
.....

EXPERIENCE & AVAILABILITY

What days and hours are you available for instruction?.....

How long have you been flying and what are your goals as an instructor?

What types of flying are you excited about?.....

How long have you been an instructor?.....

How many of your students have completed their pilot certification?.....%

How many students are you currently instructing?

ORGANIZATION & EFFICIENCY

Do you follow a syllabus?

Hint: The AOPA Flight Training Advantage makes this a snap. [click here](#)

How will I know what comes next in my flight training?.....

How will my time in the air be spent?.....

Do you offer ground instruction for skills that I can learn when I'm not in flight?.....

In what areas will we be flying on my training flights?.....

Is it possible to fly different routes throughout the course of my training?.....

Can you suggest any flight planners or websites that might be useful to me throughout my flight training?.....

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

How have you helped personalize your instruction for other students you’ve taught?.....

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I am really interested in *[part of flight training]*.....

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How will you track my progress?

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How will you help prepare me for this?.....

FOLLOW UP

How can I get in touch with you if I have more questions?

EMAIL

PHONE NUMBER

.....

.....

PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF

NAVIGATING YOUR NEXT STEPS

Your school and instructor will do their best to support you throughout your training, but you can also make sure your flight training experience is what it should be.

This means following up with instructors about lesson plans, spending time between lessons studying the next skills you'll be mastering, allowing time to prepare for your flights, and giving your flight school helpful feedback. Beyond this, your local aviation community will provide excellent avenues for involvement—and opportunities to connect with others who share your passion for flight.

WHAT IS YOUR AVIATION DREAM?

“I grew up interested in aviation and space. I always wanted to learn to fly, but I did not even try to earn a pilot certificate because of the high cost of the lessons. **I began flight training after realizing that flying, especially sport aviation and light sport aircraft, was not as expensive as I originally thought.** I am a middle school history teacher and education is one of my primary interests. Teaching kids is my passion, and I hope to inspire students to become pilots, aircraft mechanics, or simply work in the aviation fields. My goal is to become a Sport Pilot so that students can call me the flying teacher. Perhaps it will inspire my students to learn to fly if they realize that anyone, including teachers, can be pilots.”

-JEFF STEPHENSON

HOW CAN I REMAIN ENGAGED?

BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY

There are many ways to connect with fellow pilots and members of the aviation community. Explore the list of activities and events below, and stay on the lookout for additional ways to get involved.

Attend a local airshow.

Join a pilot interest group, such as your local airport support group.

Join or start a new pilot group.

Invite friends or family to join you on your next training flight.

Ask your schools about ways you can get involved.

Watch movies about flying.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Thanks to aviation websites, online videos, and advancements in simulator quality, there are many resources and tools that you can use to reinforce your training and keep your momentum going as you learn new skills and techniques.

AOPA's [Air Safety Institute YouTube](#) Channel is a great place to start.

ADVENTURE AWAITS

For many people, dreams are left on the back burner for far too long. By exploring your interest in flight training and setting plans in motion, you're already on the path to one of the most enriching adventures of your life.

As you celebrate the freedom and challenge of becoming a pilot, remember how you got here. Remember your dreams of seeing the world from a different perspective, of playing in three dimensions, and of pushing yourself to adopt new skills and conquer new challenges.

Now that you've planned your journey, selected your school, spoken with instructors, shared your decision with friends and family, and planned your flight training approach, there's only one thing left to do. Go fly.



APPENDIX

The FAA issues three classes of medical certificates: First Class, Second Class, and Third Class. But you may not need one!

The First Class medical certificate is a requirement for many professional pilot jobs, including all airline captains. There are some pilot jobs which require a Second Class medical certificate, which has less stringent requirements than the First Class medical certificate. Not planning on flying professionally? A Third Class medical certificate is all you'll need. No medical certificate is required when flying gliders, balloons, or light-sport airplanes.

If you plan to attend a university that offers a degree with pilot certificates, the university may require a First or Second Class medical certificate.

You will schedule a physical examination with a designated Aviation Medical Examiner (referred to as an AME). Before your appointment, you will complete an online application at <https://medxpress.faa.gov/>. The application asks you questions about your medical history, doctor visits, and medication usage. The physical examination by the AME will be similar to a general physical exam that you would normally have with your family doctor. The AME will check your visual acuity and color vision, hearing, and blood pressure. While not common, there may be a urine test to check for blood, sugar, or protein in the urine.

If you meet the minimum medical certification standards, the medical examiner will issue you a combination student pilot certificate and medical certificate.

Important Tip Regarding Medical Exams: If you are in generally good health, there should be no reason why you can't obtain a medical certificate. However, while some conditions (or medications for those conditions) are acceptable to the FAA, others may cause automatic denials or deferrals. You should understand this BEFORE you visit the AME. AOPA has an excellent team in our Pilot Information Center that can help you avoid the hassles, headaches, and expense that may result from denials and/or deferrals. Please consider calling AOPA if you take any medication or have any reason to believe you may not be able to pass a physical exam. Our staff members are experts on the subject, and all conversations are confidential. 800.USA.AOPA (872.2672)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE THIRD CLASS

This certifies that *(Full name and address):*

Weight	Hair	Eyes	Sex
179	BROWN	BROWN	M

Not valid for any class after January 31, 2012. Must wear lenses for distant, have glasses for near vision.

Standards prescribed in part 67, Federal Aviation Regulations for this class of Medical Certificate.

Examiner's Designation No.

Limitations

Date of Examination
01/05/2011

Signature

Typed Name
K.S. BIGNATI

Control No.:

(8-29) Supersedes Previous Edition

STAY CONNECTED

AOPA works every day to make flying more fun, affordable, and safe. Visit our [website!](#) It's an excellent source of information for all pilots.

If you like online learning, the [Air Safety Institute](#) is an excellent source.

Our [Flight Training magazine](#) also contains helpful articles that do a great job of demystifying some of the things you may encounter during your training.

TO help you and your instructor, keep track of your training, try [AOPA's Flight Training Advantage \(AFTA\)](#). It's fully customizable to suit your needs.

Finally, if you have any aviation-related questions, our Pilot Information Center (PIC) is standing by to help. Just call 800.USA.AOPA (872.2672) or contact us [online](#).

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