

The way it should be©

The truism that the way you first learn something stays with you for life applies doubly to flying. The student who is taught procedures in flying that were acceptable or even standard forty years ago may be dangerously unsafe today. The God-like ability of the instructor to perform flying miracles of precision and performance gives a halo to even antiquated instruction. You will remember forever the way you were first taught. The way you hold the yoke, move the trim, hold the throttle, tune the frequencies, or use a checklist from the beginning will influence the way you fly for ever. In my opinion, the most difficult teaching/learning process is to change a flying process learned early on. In a stress situation the pilot will invariably revert back to the first learned procedure. The radio techniques of forty years ago are the equivalent of Elizabethan English in today's airspace. "Roger" and "wilco" still live. The visual perception of what makes a good landing approach will always be the one you first learned. The student, with his flying career ahead, can only proceed oblivious to any deficiency of procedure and the hazards created thereby. There is enough poor instruction around to make learning to fly still potentially dangerous.

Flight instruction should be a planned sequence of behavior forming and modification. You are learning to survive in an extremely complex environment. Your ability to perform must be increasingly precise. Failure to perform can and will result in serious consequences. Much of what you are expected to do is completely contrary to all your most basic instincts. Behind every major flight performance there is a multiplicity of small movements and skills required to make a safe result possible. Students learn their attitudes toward flying from the instructor. Attitudes affect behaviors. The teaching of a safe flying attitude is even more important than a high skill level. As an instructor I will try to always give the "why" of what we do. If I forget, ask. The reason behind doing a particular act makes the act more meaningful, more likely to be remembered, and more acceptable to the student.

If the student has not prepared for the lesson, then the lesson should be canceled, changed to a review, or otherwise adapted for best utilization of resources. On occasion, cancellation is the best way to get the student to pay attention to the requirements of learning to fly. The student should be told the sequence of maneuvers the instructor plans to follow. New skill elements will be introduced early in the lesson. Review and skill maintenance will be covered as time allows. Any discussion, along with diagrams and walk through, should cover the procedure, control movements, power settings, common errors, and performance standards.

The individual lesson is homemade and hand made to fit the student. The success and failures of the prior lessons are blended into the plans and expectations for today. I will preview on every succeeding flight some of the basics of airspeed, turns, and changes of configuration. The transition, entry, and recovery from every maneuver requires constant review just to maintain the present skill levels and to continue improvement. A given student has different needs than any other. The instructor must have a repertoire of instructional devices capable of meeting a variety of student requirements. The basic 30 degree banked level turn is comprised of a multiplicity of subtle yoke pressures and rudder applications. Very often the pressures must be anticipated in one direction but not the other. For this reason it is instructionally

desirable to practice as much to the left as to the right in every maneuver.

Prior to every flight I will spend at least 30 minutes discussing the skill building blocks upon which the coming maneuvers will be based. I will walk through, diagram, and 'handee' so that the student understands both the maneuvers and the performance parameters. I will depart up wind if possible to make the flight less costly. I use the climbout to teach skills such as Dutch rolls. I plan the entire lesson so that when completed we will be in position to contact our home base. If opportunities allow I would suggest that every instructor have a diagram of the airport and its taxiways on the asphalt of size sufficient to allow a walk-through of procedures.

We make a sequential listing of the expected frequencies we will need for the radio. We will occasionally review the universal frequencies that we should know. The most common are: 122.95, 122.0, 122.1, 122.2, 122.9, 122.75, and 121.5. If you cant say what the frequencies are used for or how, you should do some studying. According to experience I will help the student to mentally, orally, or write the expected communications to accompany the frequencies. Additionally, we plan the taxi route to the departure runway and the way we will depart. Our return is planned the same way with a pre-decided call-up checkpoint and a requested landing entry. As much as possible a different departure and arrival will be used on every flight.

The instructor should have given the student some idea as to what to expect on the next flight. This information is basic to any student preparation required. My students are expected to follow up with a phone call the night before a flight so that in addition to discussion of the planned flight alternatives caused by weather or time can be covered. As a student, you can reduce the stress of a lesson by being prepared. Your instructor will set your standards of expectations and preparation. The biggest problems will be scheduling and student preparation. Most of the expense of learning to fly is due to a poor scheduling program. Scheduling more frequent lessons is always better for the learning/teaching process.