



# THE FLYING INSTRUCTOR

An instructor must be a good pilot and although his/her flying must be smooth and polished it must also be spirited. The instructor must possess and outwardly demonstrate a high standard of discipline, common sense and initiative, which are the cornerstones of airmanship.

The instructor must also display leadership qualities, without which the above qualities will be lacking.

There are times when an instructor may give an explanation that is lacking in detail for the purpose of not confusing or overloading the student, especially in the early stages of training.

The good instructor generally knows if there is a personal problem bothering the student and may show welcomed concern to the student by casually asking how the matter is unfolding. This style creates an atmosphere of apparent care in the mind of the student and can improve his/her overall performance on the day.

Evidence suggests that as instructors deal with students who are frequently under stress the instructor gets to know the student, in some aspects of life, to a greater degree than a family member or even a spouse. Because of these circumstances an instructor may become more to the student than simply a specialist teacher. Instances of students seeking advice from their flying instructor on various matters outside of aviation, including life style issues, are not uncommon. Should a student become intrusive in the life of an instructor the matter needs to be dealt with very firmly and at an early stage.

The airborne working conditions of an instructor are often cramped with poor seating as well as being either too warm or too cold. These factors can be compounded by turbulence and having to monitor an often-busy radio frequency coupled with poor student performance during repetitive exercises. Nevertheless, instructors must develop or enhance patience and perseverance with both attributes being sorely tested by some students and the working conditions but weaknesses in these areas should never be obvious to the student.

Instructors need to avoid unnecessary chatter in the air, which is a frequent weakness with many instructors who mean well but effectively 'swamp' their student's with information. In the early stages of training a student should normally only be corrected immediately for lapses

in airmanship. Allowing the student to experiment, especially with fault corrections, will usually pay dividends in the long run. In the case of an excessive delay in fault correction keywords like 'balance', 'height' or 'trim' said in a firm but friendly tone may produce better results than a lengthy dissertation. Sometimes it may be prudent for the instructor not to even comment on an error in the early stages of training unless the student is frequently demonstrating a similar error.

'Standard patter' is attractive from a lesson preparation perspective but does have disadvantages because of different learning rates.

The delivery rate of new information has to be judged carefully as even one 'package' (i.e. part of a lesson) that is overly complicated in the mind of the student may downgrade the student's performance for the remainder of the lesson. The acceptable delivery rate of new information to the student needs to be combined with good demonstrations and adequate student practice.

The latter is often rushed and this failure to allow for consolidation will ultimately lead to longer term slowing of the student's progress, especially during the early lessons on circuits.

An instructor should assume full control of the aircraft when it is necessary to re-brief or debrief the student in flight. This allows the student to better concentrate on what is being said.

Airborne sequences must follow an acceptable method of teaching like: Demonstrate, Direct then Monitor. Remember that at times two or more demonstrations may be required, each perhaps with a slightly different emphasis, in order to correct consistent faults.

Junior instructors often fall into the trap of constantly assessing their students rather than simply correcting their errors and patiently guiding them through new sequences. The teaching and testing roles in flying training are different issues and the latter is reserved for more experienced instructors who are approved testing officers.

If remedial instruction is required for a correctly identified problem it often only involves a re-demonstration or an alternative approach to the particular problem.



Instructors need to be diligent in identifying the real cause of a poor performance. Sometimes the cause may result from prior poor performance i.e. a poor landing will frequently follow a poor approach.

Despite the above, when a student is not progressing at the expected rate a careful examination of all relevant factors needs to be undertaken. This may involve self-examination by the instructor concerned or an instructor change may be warranted at the discretion of a senior instructor or the chief flying instructor.

Instructors involved in training or testing other flying instructors need to develop role playing skills of acting as a student pilot. Just as handover and takeover drills are used to prevent confusion on who is manipulating the controls a similar drill needs to be used for the commencement and termination of this role playing. The expressions "Bloggs on" and "Bloggs off" are widely used for these purposes.

Note: 'Bloggs' is a term of endearment used generically to describe a pilot under training

Instructors must let the student make the radio calls. There can be a tendency for instructors to over use the radio.