

Tips on How to find the Right Flight School/Instructor for You Take Charge of Your Training!

*Lori Parker & Ceci Stratford
SWS AEMSF Scholarship Co-Chairs*

1. Decide what type of training you believe is best for you and your goals. The FAA authorizes flight schools to operate under two sets of regulations: Part 141 and Part 61 (the school will tell you or ask them which regulation they operate under or if they offer a choice). There are advantages to both. Part 141 training follows a strict syllabus and rigid lesson plans. Part 61 is less structured allowing the student and instructor to vary the training order.
2. Then, find a reputable flight school (FBO). When evaluating options, check to see if there is a history of FAA violations and if they have had any accidents due to maintenance issues. Ask the flight school staff to walk you through their maintenance program. If they refuse to show you an aircraft's logbook, avoid training there. Every training aircraft at a flight school should be on a maintenance plan with a reputable maintenance company, and the flight school staff should be able to show you the aircraft logbooks indicating when the last inspection was completed and any maintenance issues the aircraft may have had.
3. Ask about costs, billing policy, cancellation policy and insurance. Here are some sample questions:
 - How much is the aircraft rental? Does this include fuel and oil (wet) or not (dry)?
 - How much do the instructors charge? Do they charge different rates?
 - How much time do instructors spend in ground training, briefing, and debriefing? Do they charge for this time?
 - Are there taxes or processing fees?
 - How much can I expect to spend on books, materials and online courses?
 - Are there other costs? (Overnight charges, landing fees, current examiner fees, etc.)
 - Is there a program where I get a discount for paying a certain amount up front ("block time")? How much is that amount? Is it guaranteed if the FBO closes?
 - What are the pros and cons of getting additional insurance while renting an airplane? Does the FBO require renters to have rental insurance?
4. Ask how they monitor progress and evaluate skills during the training. Look for a school whose instructors use a syllabus, lesson plans, stage checks, and progress reports.
5. Ask if they have a simulator that can be counted towards flight training. Ask how much simulator time they typically recommend and the cost.

6. When choosing a flight instructor, learn about each of the instructors at the school and their availability. Ask for a copy of their resumes. Learn about their credentials, how long they've been employed at the school, where they learned to fly, how many hours they've accrued. Learn what previous students say about them. Ask if you can speak with a student who recently passed their checkride.
7. Interview potential instructors. Ask questions such as:
 - How many hours do you have teaching as a CFI?
 - How many students have you put through a certificate or rating?
 - What are your future goals?
 - What is your training philosophy?
 - What is your schedule and general availability?
8. During and after the meeting, ask yourself if you are comfortable with this person. Do you trust them? Do you believe you could form a productive working relationship with this person?
9. Talk with Ninety-Nines and other pilots. They may be able to provide information on flight schools and specific CFIs. However, make your own decision based on what you learned and what makes you the most comfortable.
10. If you are in the middle of training and it is not working, don't be afraid to change instructors - It's your money and you hired this CFI! If it doesn't feel right, have a discussion with your instructor, or request another CFI.