

7 Questions to Ask When Choosing a Flight Instructor

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Choosing the right flight instructor is the single most important factor for the success of your training. Remember, you are choosing him/her to work for you, so be choosy. For your initial training (private or sport), I recommend flying with at least 3 different instructors before making your selection.

Here are 7 questions to help guide your selection as you interview and conduct demo flights with prospective instructors:

1. Do they take the time to get to know me?

Your instructor should care about you and your goals. And he/she should be focused on helping to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of you achieving those goals. That can only happen if your instructor knows about your specific goals and the unique obstacles you face. He/she should care enough to ask.

2. Do they sincerely listen without interrupting when I talk?

If the answer is no, this is a big red flag. Not listening is often a sign that the other person believes he/she already knows what you need. Every person and situation is unique. Don't work with instructors that assume too much.

3. Are they friendly and easy to talk to?

You don't need to be best buds with your instructor, but you do need to have a friendly relationship that makes it easy to communicate and work through the normal stresses of flight training. Be sure to choose someone that you get along with. You should always look forward to meeting with your instructor.

4. Are they relaxed and calm in the cockpit?

Flight training can be stressful at times. Your instructor should be a calming element in the cockpit, not part of the stress.

5. Do they follow an organized syllabus / training curriculum?

You need a track to run on - a path to follow. Under FAR Part 61, it's fine to deviate from the syllabus to personalize your training, but there needs to be a syllabus to start with. It's another red flag if your instructor does not even have a game plan.

6. Do they know their stuff?

It's assumed that all flight instructors know what they should to be an instructor (which could be a dangerous assumption), but you need to keep your eyes and ears wide open. Does your instructor often seem confused by local procedures, equipment in the airplane, etc.? This is another red flag to watch for.

7. Do they let me fly the plane without always grabbing the controls?

With the exception of the first several takeoffs and landings, your instructor should let you do most of the flying. If he/she seems jumpy and quick to grab the controls without notice, this is another red flag. It's usually something that new instructors do, but I've also heard of high-time instructors who seem to have not learned how damaging this can be to their clients. It's distracting, causes confusion, and erodes confidence.

Some of this is difficult to assess after just one meeting / flight, so even after you choose your instructor, don't hesitate to make a change if needed. You are the customer and you should never feel obligated to stay with an instructor that is not a good fit for you.

My friend and mentor, Greg Brown, also shares some great tips at:

gregbrownflyingcarpet.com/2009/06/26/choosing-a-good-flight-instructor/

Need someone to talk to about your specific situation? Consider joining Greg Brown's private Facebook group to connect with like-minded aviators that can help at:

facebook.com/groups/StudentPilotPepTalk