

CHOOSING *the perfect* INSTRUCTOR

THINGS TO ASK YOUR POTENTIAL CFI:

HOW MANY “DUAL GIVEN” HOURS DO YOU HAVE?

You'd like to have a CFI with +200 hours dual given and +200 hours/year.

HOW MANY STUDENTS HAVE YOU SIGNED OFF FOR PPL CHECKRIDES (+ HOW MANY HAVE PASSED THEIR FIRST TRY) IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS?

You're looking for an instructor that has sent at least 5 students for checkrides for the same license or rating you are seeking and for them to have all passed on their first try.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN A YEAR OR TWO?

You want your instructor to say “teaching here”. Most CFIs only teach at a school for 12-18 months, and then will quit with 2 weeks notice and go take the next higher paying aviation job (either airlines or some other commercial job). You may find a CFI that has a year of teaching experience and meets your criteria, but they are not a good fit if they are going to be taking a new job in a few months (if they say they are taking a new job, but plan to still instruct in their time off that rarely works).

ARE YOU A FULL-TIME CFI AT THIS SCHOOL?

You want someone who is available to fly with you when the weather is good and your schedules align. If they have other jobs (aviation-related or not) or are a stay-at-home parent they may not be as available as you will need to avoid delays in your training.

WHAT SYLLABUS DO YOU USE? CAN I SEE IT?

Of course, the best syllabus available is the FLY8MA Private Pilot syllabus, but really you at least want them to have some sort of syllabus to follow along to ensure they train you on everything required. Too many flight instructors try to “wing it” and while you feel like you learn a lot, you end up going for your checkride to learn there are a few things they did not teach you, which likely will end with a failed checkride and expensive day.

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND BRIEFING AND DEBRIEFING VS FLYING WITH ME?

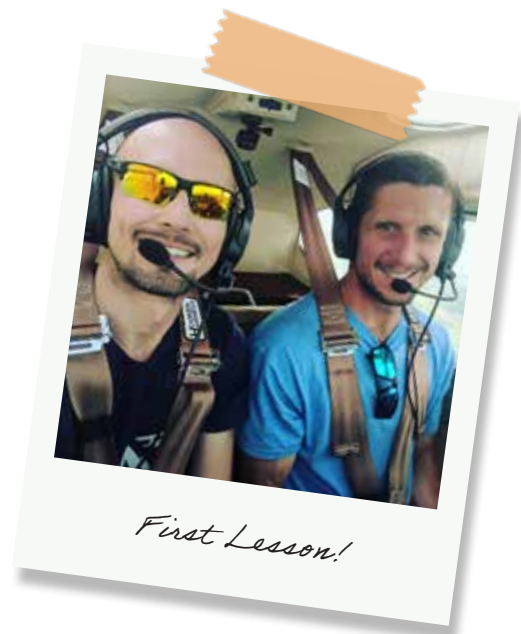
You would like to have a CFI who spends at least 30 mins briefing and debriefing before and after each flight lesson. Many CFIs do not do this as they are more focused on the flying and getting flight hours themselves rather than teaching you on the ground. Remember most CFIs are not instructing because they love teaching, they simply became an instructor because it was the fastest and easiest way for them to build flight time to get to the next level in their careers.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?

Time in calendar months matters, but so does hours of dual given. You'd like to find someone with +6 months of instruction and +200 hours dual given.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT TEACHING?

No wrong answer, aside from maybe “I like getting other people to pay for my hours to get to the airlines so I can be a Captain making lots of money and not have to deal with student pilots ever again.”



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ARE THEY A GOLD SEAL OR NAFI MASTER CFI?

This designation is for a CFI who has been instructing for awhile with a good student pass rate. If they say “yes” they are, then their CFI plastic card will have a gold DOT logo instead of black, or they will have a certificate from NAFI (National Association of Flight Instructors) that says “Master CFI.”

**A CFI cannot have these credentials unless they have signed off +10 students.*

DO THEY WORK WITH THE FAA WINGS PROGRAM (FAAST)?

This is a volunteer program instructors can give their time to. If they participate it typically means they are giving presentations and lectures on some weekends to groups of pilots. It really just means they take teaching seriously and care about promoting safety. Most CFIs do not participate, it is okay if they do not. A small fraction of the ones who do participate are just full of themselves and do it for the attention, so take it with a grain of salt.

WHAT ARE THEIR HOBBIES?

If they just say “flying” that’s fine, but really the purpose here is to see if you share any common experience that will help them relate the material to you. I.e. if you both have sailed boats, then they can use metaphors about sailing to help correlate aviation topics (or if you both have ridden motorcycles, played tennis, etc). If there is no common experience between you, it may be difficult to communicate. I.e. if you are a 60-year-old retired accountant and your instructor is a 20-year-old who has only played video games, they may not be the best suited to teach you.

WHAT DID THEY DO BEFORE FLYING?

Again, is there any common experience here that may help the two of you bond and communicate?

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS YOUR STUDENTS HAVE WHEN THEY GO FOR A CHECKRIDE?

There is no right or wrong answer here, ultimately you’ll talk to 2-3 of their past students and get the truth from them. The national average for a Private Pilot is 73.1 hours, minimum 40 hours.

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE COST YOUR STUDENTS SPEND?

Again, get the truth from the students. The only wrong answer here is “I don’t know”. That means they likely do not care enough to respect their student’s money that they are spending on training.

CAN I TALK TO TWO OR THREE STUDENTS WHO HAVE STARTED & FINISHED THEIR TRAINING WITH YOU?

Ask if they would use same CFI, how much did it cost them, how long, what would they have done differently in training? If they cannot provide contact info for at least 2 students, then run away.

HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK ARE YOU AVAILABLE TO FLY WITH ME?

You want to aim to fly 3-4 times per week, with weather and other delays, getting at least 2-3 flight per week.

HOW DO YOU BILL FOR YOUR INSTRUCTION TIME?

There is no right or wrong answer, but the typical instructor will bill from the start of the lesson to the end, and then for the aircraft only when the engine is running. I.e. you book from 1pm-3pm and fly the plane from 1:30pm-2:30pm. You will pay for 1 hour of aircraft rental and two hours instructor fees. If you book 1-3pm and show up at 1:30pm, it is more than fair they charge you from 1-3pm, you must respect their time just and they must respect yours.



We provide tips, tricks and complete learning to accompany you in ALL phases of training (from “zero time” to additional ratings + refresher courses).

Check us out:

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