

CHECKLIST:

Choosing the Best Flight School



**The Essential Questions
You Need to be Asking
Every Flight School**

CHOOSING A FLIGHT SCHOOL



“Superior planning leads to superior results”: any pilot will tell you this is indispensable advice in aviation. The better you plan; the better things tend to go when you fly.

This is usually said about preflight planning, but when you consider that the quality of your initial private pilot training will impact the safety of every future flight you make, the importance of choosing the best flight school becomes clear.

That’s not to mention the fact that you’ll be entrusting your dreams of flight, plus your time and money, to whichever pilot training program you choose. In a very real sense, this is your first command decision as an up-and-coming pilot.

But how do you conduct this research? I mean, you’re not a pilot yet, so how are you supposed to know what to ask? It can be challenging to know what separates good training programs from others, and what factors are important to consider before making a commitment. Fortunately, there is reliable advice and information available to help you make this decision.

The best way to proceed with confidence is to be armed with questions based on knowledge and experience from the flight training industry itself. We built this short checklist to help you ask the right questions when considering a flight school. Irrespective of the strengths or weaknesses of the school, they should be able to give you honest, direct answers to your questions.



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CURRICULUM

- ☐ Does the school use a curriculum for private pilot training?
- ☐ Can you have, or at least see, a copy of the syllabus?
- ☐ Do they use an online ground school or in-person classes?
- ☐ Is the school certified by the FAA under part 141? If not, why?
- ☐ Does the school have FAA FITS (proficiency based) programs?
- ☐ Is the school accredited to offer college credit?
- ☐ Does the school actively use advanced simulators?
- ☐ Can you use the simulators by yourself?
- ☐ Does the school use a simulator-based, training supplement like Redbird GIFT?

INSTRUCTOR

- ☐ Does your instructor have a professional appearance and demeanor?
- ☐ How many hours total time does your instructor have? Dual given?
- ☐ What is their first-time pass rate?
- ☐ Is your instructor planning on leaving in the next few months?
- ☐ Could you see yourself spending many hours with this person?
- ☐ If your instructor left, who would you work with?
- ☐ Are the instructors salaried or paid by the hour?
- ☐ What is the school's management structure?
- ☐ How much experience does the chief flight instructor have?



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EQUIPMENT

- ☐ What type of aircraft does the school use for private pilot training?
- ☐ How many of these aircraft are available for scheduling?
- ☐ Does the school have simulators?
- ☐ Do the aircraft have modern, glass cockpit avionics?
- ☐ Does the simulator match the aircraft avionics and performance?
- ☐ Do the aircraft and simulators look clean and well maintained?
- ☐ Who does the maintenance on the aircraft?
- ☐ Do they have computers and other support equipment you can use?

FACILITIES

- ☐ Are the facilities clean, neat, and professional?
- ☐ Are the facilities adequate for the number of customers?
- ☐ Is there space for studying, flight planning, and debriefing?
- ☐ Can you access the facility without an instructor?
- ☐ Is there restaurant, storage, or other support services?

OTHER FACTORS

- ☐ How long has the flight school been in business?
- ☐ How many customers have they graduated?
- ☐ What is the overall success rate for first-time flight tests?
- ☐ What were the reasons for any failures?
- ☐ Are you required to sign a long-term contract?
- ☐ According to the school, what separates it from other operations?
- ☐ Can you talk to current and past customers?

