

FLIGHT TRAINING

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2023

YOU CAN **FLY** YOUR PATH TO
BECOME
A PILOT

GOOD ADVICE

LESSONS LEARNED
FROM THOSE WHO
HAVE BEEN THERE

P. 30

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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

If we can do it, so can you

BY ALICIA HERRON



Many dream of flight, but few choose to take the leap. Congratulations for starting the journey to become a pilot!

When I was in high school, my dentist's office was right under the departure path for Zamperini Field in Torrance, California. Every six months I would look out the window during my teeth cleaning and watch airplane after airplane fly overhead. Eventually I started to think that if they could do it, maybe I could do it, too. Between that and excessively rewatching Indiana Jones movies, I couldn't get aviation out of my mind. But with no pilots in my family, I had many questions and no answers, and it would be years before I started flying lessons. *Could I even become a pilot as a civilian? How much would lessons cost? And would I have to buy an airplane? How much does an airplane cost? Is ground school an actual scheduled class I have to take? Will I feel like a bird?*

Thankfully, my mom's friend, who had a Beechcraft Baron at the time, heard I wanted to become a pilot. For my nineteenth birthday, he and his wife gifted me an introductory flight. After that short half-hour introduction to

general aviation—my first time at the controls—I knew I would become a pilot, no matter what. And without that flight and guidance into GA from someone in the know, I doubt I would be where I am today, many certificates, hours, and adventures later.

Every year, we at AOPA make this magazine to help guide you through the fascinating (and sometimes intimidating) world of learning to fly. Here you'll find info on choosing a flight instructor and flight school, what to expect on your student pilot journey, and aspirational stories about airplanes you could fly one day. Will you fly high and fast across the country to places like Teterboro, New Jersey, and Van Nuys, California, in a sleek Cirrus SR22? Or will you choose the low and slow life and hop around the grass strips of the Idaho backcountry in a Piper Super Cub? Maybe you'll discover you prefer float flying in the turquoise waters of the Florida Keys. The choice is yours, and the possibilities are nearly endless.

Dream on, fly on, and get ready for one of the best experiences of your life! Every pilot started right where you are now: with zero hours in our logbook but a wish to learn to fly. If we can do it, so can you. Good luck, fly safe, and enjoy the journey. 🧭

alicia.herron@aopa.org



AVIATION PIONEERS

KATHERINE SUI FUN CHEUNG

"There's no feeling like it in the world. Being up in the air, the wind blowing, the exhilaration, that's my definition of joy. It's complete freedom."

—Cheung learned to fly in Los Angeles in 1932 and became a stunt pilot, barnstormer, and air racer. Her many honors include induction into the Women in Aviation Hall of Fame.



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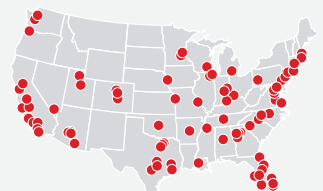
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Let's

By Sarah Deener
Photography by Chris Rose,
David Tulis, and Mike Fizer

Shake off your doubts,
climb in the cockpit,
and achieve your dream

GO! >>>



T. JAY LOUDIS

What does it take to learn to fly? Our friend Google is here to tell you it will take two months to four years and cost somewhere between \$5,100 and \$91,995. You'll have to be at least 16, or 18, or 21—or maybe it's 23?—and you'll need a medical certificate, but maybe you won't. And if you call your local flight school with questions you might hear some version of “it depends.”

Frustrated? You're not alone.

Learning to fly will unlock adventures in distant locations, connect you to a fellowship of aviators, and instill you with the confidence of achieving your dreams—but it's also new and different and complicated, with requirements that vary based on your personal flying goals. Don't despair. There are answers to your questions, and you'll find them at the airport.



More than 5,000 airports nationwide are open to the public—including remote grass strips with access to camping and other adventures.



AVIATION PIONEERS

MARIE MARVINGT

“This new sport is comparable to no other. It is, in my opinion, one of the most intoxicating forms of sport, and will, I am sure, become one of the most popular...It is so delicious to fly like a bird!”

– World-renowned athlete and balloon pilot, Marvingt was the third woman in the world to receive a fixed-wing pilot license. She received the Croix de Guerre from the French government for her service in World War I and later became a pioneer of air ambulance services.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Pilots love flying. If they’re not flying, they’re probably talking about flying or hoping someone will bring it up. So, if you want to learn more about flying, ask the pilots you know (and you probably know some). Whether they’re your dentist or your uncle’s plus-one at a wedding, the pilots in your life will welcome the opportunity to share their passion and knowledge.

The best place to find pilots, of course, is an airport. Check out the restaurant at your community airport and ask for a seat at the window or find a bench with a view of the runway. As you watch airplanes take off and land, chat with the kindred souls you find. The more you show up, the more pilots you’ll meet. You’ll learn the names for the airplanes around you, peer under cowlings with newfound friends in their hangars, and learn about the flight schools and instructors on the field. You may also score airplane rides when your friends are planning a flight with an empty seat. Grab a rag to help clean the wings afterward and you’ll increase your chances of a repeat invitation.



Cleaning the airplane is more than good form—it gives you a chance to learn the parts of the airplane, swap flying stories, and build friendships.

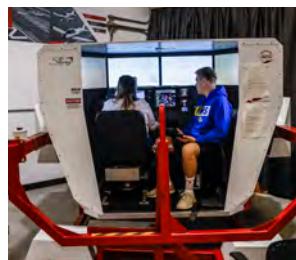


Finding a school or instructor

Great flight schools and instructors offer more than just quality training. They are focused on the customer, foster community with events and opportunities to connect with other students, and share information so you know what you're getting into and where you stand in your training. When you're ready to start your training,

pilots at your local airport can help you find the right school or independent instructor. You can also search for schools in AOPA's flight school finder; schools that have been recognized with a prestigious AOPA Flight Training Experience Award are marked in the results with "Winner."

» aopa.org/flightschoolfinder



Know what you're looking for? Filter your search results by type of aircraft or simulators available.

The AOPA Flight Training Advantage

A growing number of flight schools and instructors are taking advantage of the AOPA Flight Training Advantage (AFTA), an adaptive flight training system designed to help students progress through training more efficiently. With AFTA, you always know what to expect and how to prepare for each flight. It's free to AOPA members, instructors, and schools—ask if your flight school uses AFTA as part of its primary training program.

» aopa.org/afta



TIME AND MONEY

The exciting thing about learning to fly is that the possibilities are endless: If two pilots start out with lessons in the same four-seat Cessna 172, one might go on to land on gravel bars in Alaska while the other lands a job in the flight deck of a Boeing. Requirements and training for different types of flying vary, so the instructor at your local flight school (probably) isn't deflecting when you ask how much training will cost and they say it depends. But the conversation shouldn't end there. A good flight school or instructor will give you an overview of training and set some basic expectations based on your goals and circumstances. The most important expectations involve time and money.

The biggest factor affecting both is the level of certification you want to earn. To fly for an airline, for instance, you'll need to progress through multiple levels of certification over the course of years; that's where you'll see higher

cost estimates that often involve making an acquaintance with Sallie Mae. Many pilots earn an initial certificate, however, in 50 to 80 hours of flying and spending \$8,000 to \$16,000. You may decide to add certificates and ratings later as your aviation goals change (see "That's the Ticket," p. 32), but a private, sport, or recreational certificate opens the door to the freedom and community of flying.

In flight training, costs are mostly determined by the aircraft rental (usually "wet," which means it includes fuel costs) and instruction time from a certificated flight instructor (including on the ground and in the air), both billed hourly. Geographic location affects the rate for both, and other factors in hourly costs include a CFI's experience level or specialty and the age, size, and sophistication of the aircraft. The type of flight school can influence the amount of time you need to spend in the airplane, as pilots in highly structured programs





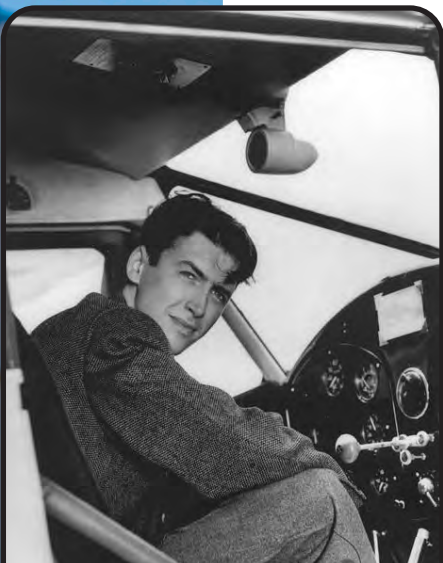
Before you get your medical

An important consideration when beginning training is the medical certification requirements for the level of certification you think you want to pursue (see “The Doctor Will See You Now,” p. 38)—including down the line if you aspire to become a professional pilot. You don’t have to be an athlete in peak physical condition to earn a medical certificate, but a few medical conditions are disqualifying, and some others may require costly and time-consuming testing. Finding out ahead of time how any current or past conditions could affect your medical certification will help you avoid delays by preparing all the required documentation before your aviation medical examination. Or you might choose to bypass the expense and hassle of certain requirements by opting to pursue a sport pilot certificate. AOPA medical certification specialists help members with medical certification questions, and Pilot Protection Services covers review of medical records prior to submission.

Call 1-800-USA-AOPA for help with your medical certificate.

The fundamentals you learn in flight training will serve you well in your future flying, whether you speed along in a high-performance aircraft or land on gravel bars in Alaska in an airplane equipped with tundra tires.





AVIATION PIONEERS

JIMMY STEWART

"There's so many things to think about up there that you forget things down below. Flying is something altogether different from the way I'm earning my living. That's what I like about it... flying is a sort of guarantee that life will continue to have variety."

—Iconic Hollywood actor and bomber pilot during World War II, Stewart was a lifelong avid pilot and owned several aircraft. He retired from the U.S. Air Force as a brigadier general.

may earn a certificate in fewer hours. The biggest variable, however, is you. Flying frequently and studying between lessons can help you progress efficiently through training, and pilots naturally vary in how quickly they pick up certain skills in training. For tips on making the most of your training budget, see "Show Me the Money," p. 36.

KNOW, DO, DEMONSTRATE

To earn your pilot certificate, you'll need to pass a computerized knowledge test; fly for a minimum number of hours with an instructor and on your own; and demonstrate your skills, knowledge, and judgment in a flight test.

You can pick up some of what you need to know for the knowledge test in pre- and postflight discussions with your instructor during training, but you'll need to dedicate time to a course of ground training. Some flight schools offer in-person ground school, and several online providers offer full private pilot ground training programs. Or, you can read textbooks at home. When you're ready to take the test, you'll earn an endorsement from an instructor certifying you've demonstrated you know your stuff. (Online training programs often provide an automatic endorsement once you complete the course.)



And, of course, you'll get to fly. Private pilot applicants need to log at least 40 hours of flight time, which must include training in areas such as night flying, flying by reference to instruments as if you're in the clouds, navigating to airports far from your home base, and more. You'll practice takeoffs and landings, radio communication, and other skills—and once your instructor says you're ready, you'll even fly on your own. Your instructor will help to ensure you meet all these requirements and note them in your logbook to show the examiner.

Embrace the fun

Flight training is challenging. It can be tedious and frustrating at times as you stretch your knowledge and skills, but it will unlock a world of amazing experiences known only to a relative few. And you don't have to wait until you earn your certificate to experience the fun and freedom of flying. Embrace the journey and work fun into your training.

- » **Hang out:** Spend time at the airport to see cool airplanes, meet interesting people, and absorb the language of aviation.
- » **Go to events:** Like hanging out at the airport, but even cooler airplanes show up.
- » **Build it in to training:** There's no regulation that says training flights can't take you to fun places. Ask your instructor to make your cross-country flight to an airport café, or practice real-world short- or soft-field landings at a scenic remote airstrip.
- » **Try something new:** If you're stuck in a rut and the regular lessons feel like drudgery, consider an aerobatic or tailwheel lesson to energize you while teaching applicable skills.

- » **Celebrate your successes:** Take the time to congratulate yourself when you do something right. During your lesson debrief, go over what you did better than last lesson, or a month ago. Progress isn't linear, so that long-term view will help you shake off an off day and see how far you've come.



In private pilot training, you'll fly with an instructor, fly solo, travel to other airports, and practice at night, among other requirements.



AOPA can help

Stuck on a concept or looking to delve deeper? The AOPA Air Safety Institute offers videos and resources on topics ranging from aerodynamics to fuel management. Also check out articles and videos about aircraft systems, technique, and more from AOPA's *Flight Training* magazine.


» airsafetyinstitute.org

» aopa.org/ft



Most pilots fly more than the required number of hours because learning to fly isn't just about checking off the requirements; you're also building the skills and confidence to fly to a variety of destinations as pilot in command once you earn your certificate. Your instructor will help you know when you're ready to take the final test, known as the checkride.

All your practice and learning come together in the checkride. The test starts on the ground, where the examiner asks questions about flight planning, regulations, and other topics. Then you'll hop in the airplane and show them what you can do.

Once you taxi back and shut down after a successful checkride, your examiner will shake your hand and offer congratulations. You're a pilot! All that hard work has paid off. You may fly different airplanes, explore new places, challenge yourself in different environments, and add new certificates and ratings. Many pilots call their pilot certificate a "license to learn" because there's so much to do and see and learn from this point forward. Your adventure is only beginning. 

sarah.deener@aopa.org





Know where you stand

AFTA tracks your progress toward the aeronautical experience requirements of the private pilot certificate and displays your instructor's ratings of your performance on maneuvers so you can understand how close you are to meeting the test standards. Based on your performance in each lesson, it will suggest what to do on your next lesson and provide resources to help you prepare.

» aopa.org/afta




AIRCRAFT YOU CAN FLY

Oh, the cool airplanes
you'll get to know

BY ALICIA HERRON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROSE AND MIKE FIZER

One of the most fun parts of flying is adding new aircraft and experiences to your logbook. Here are a few aircraft that range from attainable and common to rare and bucket-list worthy that you may wish to fly during your aviation journey. 

alicia.herron@aopa.org

Cessna 152

The dependable, the trusty, the ubiquitous Cessna 152. This two-seat, tricycle gear aircraft has been a staple in general aviation since it first started production in 1977 as a follow-up to the 1959-born Cessna 150. The economical 152 is great for training, first-time aircraft owners, those time-building for professional pilot jobs, and anyone looking to get in the air at almost the lowest price possible. And despite its small size, the 152 is fun to fly.

“The Cessna 152 is small, simple, and straightforward, which made it a perfect airplane for me to gain experience in flight planning, weather theory, and decision making. Years ago, I flew a 152 from Florida to Maryland solo. The real-world experience navigating unfamiliar airspace, changing routes for weather, talking to controllers, and even finding transportation from the airport to a hotel provided just the confidence boost I needed.”
—Editor Sarah Deener on flying the Cessna 152



Kitfox 4

If you dream of exploring the backcountry, landing on grass runways, or entering a short takeoff and landing (STOL) demo one day, this experimental taildragger might be the choice for you. You can build your own and customize it to be exactly what you want, and with the experimental designation, you can perform more maintenance as a pilot/owner than on a certified aircraft. The Kitfox offers great visibility, and will work best for a pilot looking to fly low and slow.



Cirrus Vision Jet

No other general aviation aircraft on the market right now says “I’ve arrived” quite as well as the Cirrus SF50 Vision Jet. This sleek, single-engine jet with the manufacturer’s signature ballistic Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS) can fly up to five adults and two children. You’ll need a type rating for the SF50, which you can earn at Cirrus’s Vision Center in Knoxville, Tennessee.



Cessna Caravan on Floats

If lake-hopping in Minnesota or flying the Florida Keys calls to you, you might fall in love with a float-equipped Cessna Caravan. This capable, turbine-powered single-engine airplane is known for its versatility and relative simplicity. Load up your friends for lunch on the beach or even turn the spacious cabin into a camper if you're feeling adventurous.

"It's like a speedboat with wings. It accelerates like a cigarette boat and glides like a Steinway. It's a luxury air yacht that cruises at 150 knots and can land just about anywhere." —*Editor at Large Dave Hirschman on flying a Caravan on floats*



Boeing Stearman

Step back in time and experience the romance of early aviation with the Boeing Stearman. This iconic biplane is perhaps best known as the primary trainer for the U.S. military during World War II. Other than flight training, they've been used for carrying mail, wing walking, and aerobatics. As eye-catching on the ramp as they are in flight, Stearmans should be a bucket list item for every aviator to add to their logbook.



Schleicher ASK-21

Experience a different side of aviation by flying a sailplane and soaring like a bird. These engineless, long-winged, highly aerodynamic aircraft are great for developing stick-and-rudder skills and a superior understanding of lift and drag. And since you can solo a glider at 14, they're a great place to start if you want to start young (or have your kids start young). Sailplane pilots cite the in-flight peacefulness and glider pilot community as some of their favorite reasons to fly gliders.



Robinson R44

No other aircraft offers quite as much maneuverability as a helicopter, which can hover, land practically anywhere, and fly backward. The instantly recognizable, sleek Robinson R44's versatility and relatively low price point makes it a favorite around the world for everything from agriculture to police work to air tours and training.

"For someone who has trained in a Robinson R22, the R44 feels a world away. It's smoother, has more power, and the hydraulic controls make it comfortable to fly long distances. Five hundred feet above the countryside in an R44 on a summer afternoon is a lovely place to be."

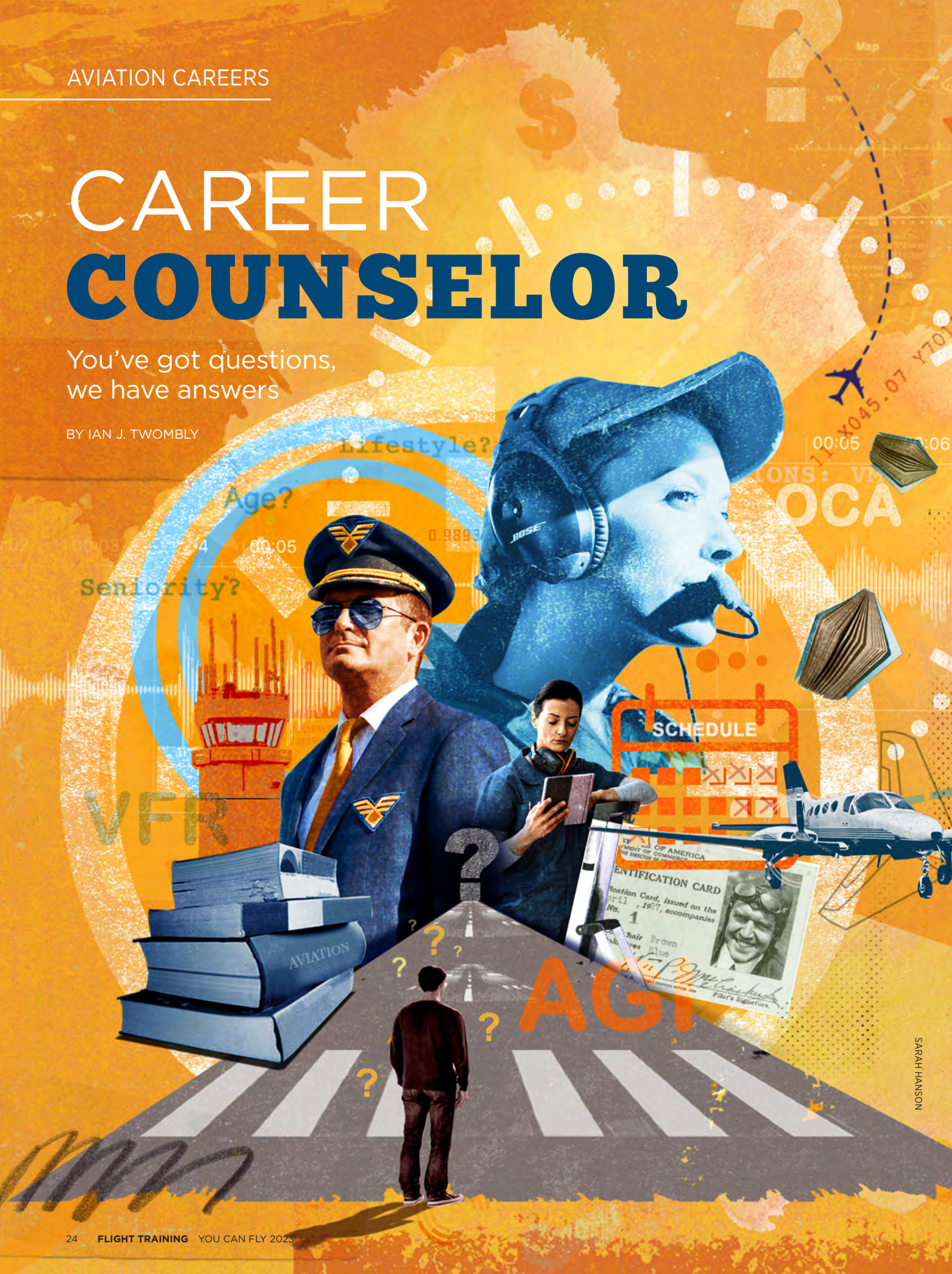
—Senior Content Producer
Ian J. Twombly on flying
the R44.



CAREER COUNSELOR

You've got questions,
we have answers

BY IAN J. TWOMBLY



SARAH HANSON



Starting any career or changing careers is always daunting. We tend to seek stability, and by its very nature embarking on a new career is voluntary instability. That's especially true of aviation careers. Most have special experience and certification requirements, and professional flying is a world shrouded in codes, systems unique to only the aviation world, and business cycles that don't always follow the larger economy.

In other words, you have questions. Probably lots of questions. While most of this guide will focus on professional flying, we've thrown in some information about nonflying aviation careers as well. Even if you don't aim to become a pilot, it can be helpful to know how the flying life works, and lots of pilots find themselves in nonflying jobs at some point in their careers.

QUESTIONS?

Am I too old/young?

Probably not, but maybe. By regulation, and with few exceptions, airline pilots must be between the ages of 23 and 65. We're going to bet that if you're reading this guide, you're in that range, but if you're too young, don't worry. Continue to build hours and experience until you can earn an airline transport pilot certificate. If you're older than 65, consider flight instructing, charter flying, flying privately for an owner, or other non-airline jobs without age limits. Air traffic controllers must be a maximum of 30 years old when they're hired, but most other aviation careers don't have age requirements.

BETWEEN AGES
23-65



Laura Azara,
Chick-fil-A Corporate Pilot

LEAH OVERSTREET

Do I need perfect vision?

We get this one at AOPA all the time, for reasons none of us understand. No, you don't need perfect vision. Professional pilots must have 20/20 distance vision, with or without glasses, and 20/40 near and intermediate vision, with or without glasses.



Should I go to an aviation college or technical program?

Part of the confusion around flight training for a career is that there are so many different avenues. College aviation programs are one, mom and pop independent flight schools and aviation academies are others. There's no right answer here. Colleges and academies can offer hiring agreements with airlines and many contacts within the industry, but independent schools might better fit your goals and needs. In this strong hiring market, it doesn't much matter where you learn to fly.

Do I need a college degree?

This depends on the job and the hiring market. Right now, even major airlines are hiring pilots without a four-year degree, but that hasn't always been the case. Mechanics don't need a degree, although formal airframe and powerplant school can be beneficial. Air traffic controllers need a degree or some job experience, and most other aviation professionals need a degree.



AVIATION PIONEERS

DOUGLAS BADER

"Don't listen to anyone who tells you that you can't do this or that. That's nonsense...never let them persuade you that things are too difficult or impossible."

—After losing both legs in an airplane crash in 1931, Bader went on to command a squadron flying Hurricanes and Spitfires in the Royal Air Force during World War II.

How is the job market?

Incredible. Airline hiring has never been better, and that draws pilots up from all other jobs, including instructing, charter, corporate, and more. Mechanics are desperately needed. Controllers are aging out. Engineers, people with a trade, and nearly all other professions are in desperate need right now. If you want to work in aviation, chances are you will find an opportunity.



How much will I earn?



Obviously, this all depends on the job. Airline pilot pay can max out at more than \$300,000 a year, and even new pilots at regional airlines now make a livable wage. In 2014, the Air Line Pilots Association published the list of worst-paying airlines, and Silver Airways, the worst still operating, paid new first officers \$18,693. According to Airline Pilot Central it's now about \$46,800, not including bonuses, per diem, and other extras. Instructing continues to be a difficult way to make a living, unless you specialize in a type.

What is seniority?

At an airline, seniority is everything. Unlike most workplaces where each promotion, layoff, and bonus is based on your performance, the needs of the company, and your relationship with your boss, at an airline the pilot is a number. He or she is given that number when hired, and it becomes the basis for every major personnel decision. Seniority impacts where pilots are based (certain bases are more "junior" or "senior," meaning more or less popular), what airplane they can fly, how long it will be until they can upgrade to captain, and whether or not they are furloughed during a downturn. It's no mystery why the advice is often to earn the hours and be hired as soon as possible, even if it means short-term financial pain or other life sacrifices.



What airline should I fly for?

This depends on a lot of factors, and it's a question only you can answer. It helps to establish your goals and values early in the process. Are you OK with moving? Do you want to get to a major airline as soon as possible? Do you care where or what you fly? Many applicants turn to online forums for answers to this question because airline hiring is so good that some candidates have multiple offers and need help choosing. The prevailing wisdom seems to be that quality of life is more important than pay. Although regional airlines extensively advertise their now-impressive pay structures, most experienced airline pilots seem to advise that living close to your base is the best thing you can do for quality of life and to avoid burning out.

What is the lifestyle like?

This all depends on the job. Some corporate pilots work for one week, then have one week home with no responsibilities. Charter pilots can be called any time of the day or night on short notice, or have days scheduled to fly and other scheduled days off. Airline pilots tend to work three- to four-day trips, with a few days off in between. That trip starts at the base, so if you live somewhere else, it's your free time you're losing. Finally, there are hundreds of thousands of nonflying jobs that have normal office hours that provide the opportunity to do something you love and pair it with your passion for aviation. If you can think of a career path, aviation most likely offers it.

1,500
FLIGHT HOURS

**+ COLLEGE
DEGREE**

How can I make myself competitive?

In this market, even pilots with 500 flight hours and no degree can find decent jobs, but expect to have 1,500 flight hours and a degree to be a competitive applicant to the airlines. For other careers, a degree remains a great way to make yourself more competitive, even if it's not in aviation. But most of all, have a passion for aviation. Pilots love to help and support those coming into the field, so whatever career you're going for, having a passion for aviation will help.

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Quality flying stuff

Gear that matters

BY DAVE HIRSCHMAN

Pilots don't like paying retail. We're known for driving hard bargains, and we'll fly long distances to get a good deal on fuel—even if we negate any benefit by using most of it to fly home.

But there are useful, durable, high-quality things pilots can buy that will serve them well throughout their life of flying.

Here are some of the best aviation items I've bought and would buy again.

THINGS YOU TOUCH

Things you're in physical contact with during flight are important to get right—and that starts with the seat of your pants.

Oregon Aero makes portable seat cushions that are miraculously comfortable, durable, and worth the high price you pay for them. My Oregon Aero cushion helps me avoid low back pain, and that just puts me in a better frame of mind. It's essential equipment on long flights, and I've been using mine for more than a decade. And for shorter pilots, it may be a necessity to reach the rudder pedals and get the proper line of sight over the control panel.

An active noise reduction (often called noise canceling) headset that's light, comfortable, and enhances communication in noisy cockpits is a good investment. I've owned both Bose and Lightspeed over the years and they're both excellent. I give Bose the edge in particularly noisy cockpits, and Lightspeed has an exceptional warranty program. Years ago, when ANR headsets were new technology, I chided a fellow pilot for shelling out big bucks for one and will never forget his response. "Yeah, the headset cost a lot—but way less than hearing aids." Point taken.

Non-polarized sunglasses protect your eyes from glare and harsh light while still allowing you to read the digital displays of glass-panel avionics. My favorites are Flying Eyes models, which use impossibly thin bands designed to slide under ANR headsets.

PLANNING AND NAVIGATION

Electronic flight bag apps replace paper maps, airport directories, and more. You'll use the app to get a weather briefing, estimate time and fuel consumption, and find out about your destination and alternate airports. Then you'll use it to file your flight plan and get updates. In the cockpit, it helps you taxi, navigate, and monitor traffic and weather. After you land, it logs your flight.

There are many good aviation apps, but ForeFlight dominates for good reasons. The ForeFlight Mobile app only works on Apple products, so if you don't already have one, an iPhone or iPad may be in your future. But once you learn the app and harness its power, you can't imagine flying without it. And if you someday fly for the military or airlines, you're likely to find that the pros use ForeFlight, too.

A Garmin portable GPS—either a smartphone-sized Aera 660 or a larger 796—is far more durable and its screen is less reflective than an iPad. These items are made for aviation, and they're robust. They won't shut themselves off on hot or cold days, and they're terrific for situational awareness. They're useful as primary navigation in sport aircraft, and they're a valuable backup in cross-country airplanes.

PACKING


There are all kinds of specialty flight bags, but my favorite is the simplest: a military surplus helmet bag. These things have only one zipper. They're incredibly tough and long lasting, and they're seemingly bottomless. I've been trying to destroy mine for years, and it looks about the same as the day I got it.

IN AN EMERGENCY

Flying can take you to beautiful, remote locations, sometimes beyond cell phone range. Pilots often carry emergency gear in case things don't go as planned.

A Garmin InReach satellite messenger is small and unobtrusive, it has incredibly long battery life, and it can summon rescuers anywhere on the planet. It's got a surprisingly hefty subscription price, especially considering I've got a basic subscription that's for SOS only. But it's essential gear, especially when flying in remote regions.

An ACR ResQLink personal locator beacon is for the same purpose. ACR sells robust models that float, tolerate extreme heat and cold, and transmit vital information about you and your airplane to rescuers.

Don't forget AOPA Pilot Protection Services. AOPA hires the best, most knowledgeable legal and medical experts in the business and puts them squarely in your corner—and that's good peace of mind. Hopefully, you'll never have to talk to one of them. But if you do, you'll find they're smart, friendly, and exceedingly helpful. 

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WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN

Flying with the benefit of hindsight

BY COLLIN CALLAHAN

Pilots like to talk about the rarified ranks that you will join when you complete your flight training. After all, they'll tell you, throughout the course of human history, only a relative few have gotten the chance to take flight. In truth, however, you will follow in the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of aviators. Through initial training, earning additional ratings, and millions of flight hours, they have learned valuable lessons. You can chart your path to the sky with the benefit of their experiences; you won't have to learn everything the hard way.

Staff of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association share some of the things they wish they had known when they were learning how to fly. 

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“Like most pilots, I could have saved myself time, money, and struggle, if only I’d known what I didn’t know when I showed up at my local flight school with dreams of learning to fly. If I could go back 25 years and share a few key things with my much younger self, here’s what I’d say: **Don’t wait.**

Learning to fly can seem like a major commitment, and it is. But the sooner you start, the sooner you’ll get to live the dream—really.

Don’t be intimidated. Even the most experienced pilot in the world started just like you.

Build or join a community. The pilots you meet, virtually and in person, can be a rich source of information, experience, and help.

Don’t skimp on the tools that can make flying easier. Buy a good ground school course. Get a subscription to a good electronic flight bag. Splurge on a noise-cancelling headset.

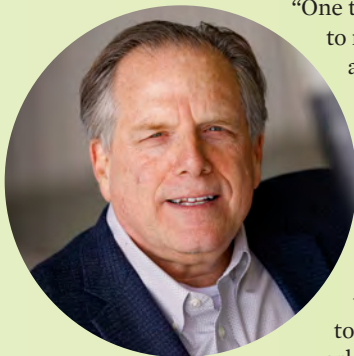
Aircraft ownership is more affordable than you think. Whether you join a flying club, enter into a partnership or dry lease, or buy your own airplane, having regular access to an aircraft (and avionics) you know well is a great way to build your skills and confidence.”

Elizabeth Tennyson, senior vice president,
AOPA Foundation



“Flight training is rewarding and enjoyable. However, it can sometimes be very stressful. It’s important to remember that **it will not always be fun.** Expect challenges. Find the joy after difficult flights. I recall driving home after tough flight lessons and looking up at airplanes overhead and thinking, ‘just did that.’”

Dave Roy, vice president of the AOPA Pilot Information Center, member services, and flight operations



“One thing that took some time to realize while training—and after getting my certificate—was that there is a lot more to flying than circling the pattern and taking short hops to neighboring airports. Yes, I was told it was a license to learn and a passport to see the country (and world), but students and new private pilots can get so ingrained in the lessons and the maneuvers needed to pass the checkride that **we need to take a breath and realize that we can go (almost) anywhere.** Take a look at the charts, find somewhere you’ve always wanted to visit, and go!”

Eric Blinderman, senior director of AOPA communications



“**Knowing how to find the information is just as valuable as memorizing.** I’ve learned which things I need to commit to memory (like emergency procedures and squawk codes) and which things I should rely on a guide or checklist, or to just look it up before a flight and refresh my memory. I spent a lot of time during my training memorizing regulations, which is a good thing, but it’s easy to get those things mixed up inside one’s head.”

Erick Webb, AOPA social media marketer



“Time management and utilization is key during flight training. An early investment in analyzing where you can find more time for studying will pay off. **Use flashcards or a ground school mobile app to take advantage of moments you’re stuck waiting away from your primary study materials.** Shave time off household tasks by getting prepared ingredients from the grocery store. Listen to reputable flight training podcasts while driving or exercising. You’ll be surprised how much small changes and short study opportunities add up.”

Sarah Staudt, AOPA safety program developer



“I wish I had spent more time flying solo and practicing maneuvers solo. I was proficient and confident when I’d fly with my instructor but found myself feeling less confident when it was time to fly solo and practice maneuvers. **If I had spent more time flying alone, I would have been a much happier and self-assured student pilot and private pilot.**”

Niki Britton, AOPA content producer



My first foray into flying was as a student glider pilot. I started glider flying when I was 16 but missed passing the glider written exam by one question. Because I didn’t really study hard, I also didn’t finish the rating. When I went to college and started my powered aircraft training, I studied more for the written exams, but my preflight prep study wasn’t as good as it could have been. **Plan to spend two to three hours for every flight hour studying what you’re going to do in the next lesson.** It will pay off and you’ll be better prepared for your lesson and checkride. Your CFI will appreciate it as well!”

John Collins, AOPA manager of aviation safety programs

THAT'S THE TICKET

What do you want to do
when you go up?

BY SARAH DEENER



WHEN YOU LEARN TO FLY, the possibilities are endless. You might end up crossing vast expanses of ocean on transatlantic airline flights, or dining at every airport restaurant in a 50-mile radius from home. You could start in an airplane, or a helicopter, or a hot air balloon. And your favorite destination airport might be bustling with jets or frequented by moose. The skills for each of these aviation challenges vary, and so do the certification requirements. Here are the licenses (formally called certificates) you'll need to accomplish your aviation goals.

INITIAL CERTIFICATES

Sport pilot

No medical certificate is required for this entry-level pilot certificate, which allows you to fly certain two-seat aircraft during the day. Additional training is required to fly where you'll be talking to air traffic control.

Minimum flight hours: 20

You can...

- Fly a friend to lunch.
- Fly to EAA AirVenture.
- Transport a rescue dog to its forever home.

Recreational pilot

Like sport pilots, recreational pilots may not take more than one passenger or fly at night. But they can fly four-seat aircraft for fun close to home. Additional training is required to fly longer distances or talk with air traffic controllers.

Minimum flight hours: 30

You can...

- Take your kid sightseeing.
- Attend a pancake breakfast near your home airport.
- Fly a Cessna 172, a widely available trainer.



Private pilot

This is the most popular initial certificate, allowing pilots to fly most common small airplanes for their personal enjoyment and forming a building block for future professional flying. Additional training is required for certain airplanes and recommended for certain environments.

Minimum flight hours: 40

You can...

- Take your family camping.
- Showcase your skills in a short-takeoff-and-landing demonstration.
- Fly into backcountry strips or along the Chicago skyline.

Fast Track

Hour requirements listed here are for training in airplanes at a common type of neighborhood flight school. Some highly structured training programs qualify for lower hour requirements, so if you're interested in a flying career, you may consider a degree program, "Part 141" flight school, or military training.

Private pilots can fly almost anywhere in the United States. Fewer restrictions than the other initial certificates means you can haul camping gear in a larger aircraft or cruise the Chicago skyline at night. To drop skydivers as a professional pilot, you'll need a commercial pilot certificate.



ADVANCED CERTIFICATES

Commercial pilot

You'll need a commercial pilot certificate to get paid to fly. It's also a prerequisite for becoming a flight instructor or airline pilot.

Minimum flight hours: 250

You can...

- Ferry aircraft to buyers across the country.
- Drop skydivers.
- Tow banners.

Certificated flight instructor


This certificate allows you to teach others to fly.

Minimum flight hours: 250

You can...

- Teach primary training.
- Specialize in advanced training.
- Be your own boss as an independent instructor.





AVIATION PIONEERS

WILLIAM POWELL

“One never becomes a competent pilot until he learns aeronautics, navigations, meteorology, and mechanics.”

—A World War I veteran, pilot, and entrepreneur, Powell established scholarships for African American students, founded a flight school and an aircraft manufacturer, published a monthly aviation journal and a popular book *Black Wings*, and organized the first all-African American airshow in 1931.

Airline transport pilot

This is required to fly for airlines or certain other companies. In most cases, you need to be at least 23 and complete a certification program.

Minimum flight hours: 1,500 for most circumstances.

You can...

- Fly freight for FedEx or UPS.
- Be captain of a Boeing or Airbus.
- Captain a private jet to faraway places.

RATINGS

Additional ratings allow you to fly different types of aircraft or in different circumstances.


Instrument rating: This lets you fly in clouds. Great if you fly for business and need to get somewhere on time. You'll also need one to fly jets.

Drones

You don't need to pass a test to fly a drone for fun, but to use it for business you'll need to earn a remote pilot certificate. The process to earn one is simpler for those who already have a pilot certificate.



Type rating: Speaking of jets, to fly one or certain other large aircraft you'll need training specific to the model you'll fly.

Other types of aircraft: Most pilots start out in single-engine airplanes. To fly other types of aircraft—multiengine, seaplanes, helicopters, balloons, or gliders, for example—you'll need additional training. 

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Show me the money

How to plan and pay for your training

Sometimes, you must put a price on accomplishing your dreams, and flying is expensive. For most people, cost is the biggest barrier to learning how to fly. Whether or not funding is an issue for you, no one likes overpaying or wasting money.

First, the basics. The FAA designates a minimum number of hours of training (aeronautical experience) and requires a multiple-choice knowledge test before you can take your practical test, or checkride. The practical test will start with an oral exam and will conclude with the flight portion. So how do you get to the checkride?

Let's look at numbers. Keep in mind that in a big city, these costs will likely be higher, and in a small town (or if you find a great deal), they could be less.

Part 61 versus Part 141?

You'll hear Part 61 and Part 141 in conversation a lot when it comes to flight training. Each refers to a section in the FAA's regulations that determine training requirements. In Part 61 training, you train at your own pace, following whatever schedule you and your instructor want. This is how most people who intend to fly as a hobby receive their training. Part 141 training is stricter, follows a

syllabus, and is what most people who intend to become professional pilots use. Your local flight school probably is a Part 61 school; aviation training programs like ATP and California Aeronautical University are Part 141 schools. At some 141 schools, and depending on the situation, you will be able to use the GI Bill or money from a 529 savings account.

Use your resources

Check out the AOPA Air Safety Institute for free educational content like quizzes, videos, podcasts, and safety spotlights. airsafetyinstitute.org

DO THE MATH

Here's an idea of what one lesson might cost you:

1 hour in the airplane: \$150

1 hour with the instructor in the air: \$50

18 minutes pre/postflight briefing: \$15

Total= \$215

At that rate, let's consider what it would take in the FAA's designated minimum number of hours:

40 hours total, at least 20 of which is with an instructor, and 10 hours solo. We'll say we're in a perfect world and 20 hours were with an instructor and 20 were solo.

$\$215 \times 20 \text{ hours} = 4,300$

$\$150 \times 20 \text{ hours} = 3,000$

Total=\$7,300

And now, at a more typical 60 hours: 50 with an instructor, 10 solo.

$\$215 \times 50 \text{ hours} = \$10,750$

$\$150 \times 10 \text{ hours} = \$1,500$

Total=\$12,250

Throw in another \$1,500 for check-ride, written testing fees, and gear (headset, kneeboard, software, study material), and you're looking at around \$8,800 best case and around \$13,750 more realistically.

Naturally, we want to keep that total as low as possible, so here are some tips on how to do that.

GET THE MONEY TOGETHER

It's a good idea to start with most if not all your intended cost set aside so that you don't get into the thick of training,

run out of money, and never finish. If you have the disposable income to start whenever you want, great, but for the average person, this phase takes planning.

Streamline the saving process by creating an automatic savings plan (which many banks offer for free) that automatically adds a certain amount on a designated schedule, and also tells you when you will reach your savings goal. You could also get a loan for part or all of your training or a temporary second job.

Many aviation organizations, including AOPA, offer scholarships. While an award is not guaranteed, you can't win if you don't try, so take a chance and apply. Other organizations with scholarships include The Ninety-Nines, Women in Aviation, and the Seaplane Pilots Association. Your local airport might also have its own scholarship, so ask around.

CHOOSE WISELY

Once you start training, schedule your lessons close together. You should plan on flying at least twice a week, and ideally three times or more. But before you dive in, carefully consider timing. When is the slowest season at your job? When is the weather best? Does your employer offer sabbaticals or leaves of absence?

Attempting to start training in your work's busiest season or in the height of winter may needlessly increase the challenge and cost of learning to fly. Flying back-to-back-to-back will cost less in the long run; you won't have to repeat lessons because of skill decay, and you'll also feel much more confident in the airplane.

STUDY

Flying is the fun part (of course), but becoming a pilot requires book work and studying as well. There's nothing more frustrating than getting ready for a flight on a beautiful day and then being told by your instructor that you must spend that time doing groundwork instead because you didn't study.


Don't waste time and money by not doing your homework. If you show up prepared for lessons you will not only save your instructor the need to repeat themselves, but you'll also likely become their favorite student.

Does it seem overwhelming? Here's a little checklist you can follow to get started. Good luck!

1. Acquire the funds. If you have to wait and save up, milestones of a thousand dollars can help you feel like you're making progress.

2. Apply for a scholarship.

3. Choose a time to start training that makes sense with your schedule, obligations, and the weather.

4. Schedule a month of training, at least two lessons a week, and never leave the airport without knowing when your next lesson will be. 

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AVIATION PIONEERS

R. A. "BOB" HOOVER

"I'm just like anybody else. I get scared when I know all hell is breaking loose around me, or I'm on fire, but I have conditioned myself to react with 'What are you going to do to get out of this?' That has saved my life a lot of times because I could respond without having to think."

—Known as "the greatest stick-and-rudder man that ever lived" Hoover was a test pilot, fighter pilot, aerobatic performer, and executive at North American Rockwell. During World War II he escaped a POW camp by stealing a German airplane.

Scholarships

Made possible through donations to the AOPA Foundation, more than \$1 million in scholarships are a major benefit of AOPA membership, helping members reach their aviation goals. aopa.org/scholarships

THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

What you need to know about medical certification



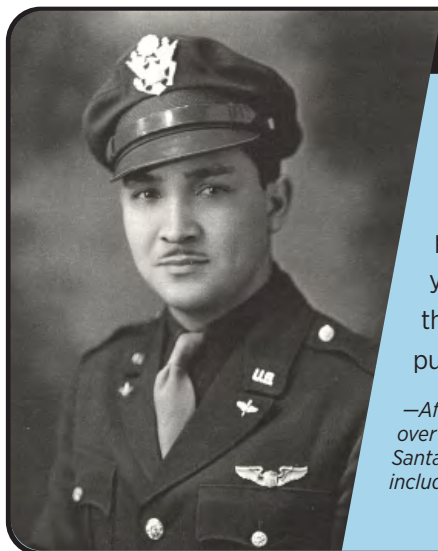
Any exciting new venture brings challenges. In the case of learning to fly, those challenges could include finding the means to pay for training or finding a good flight school. But in some instances, the challenge is you—more specifically, your health history.

The FAA holds pilots to high medical standards to ensure they are safe to operate powered aircraft. The agency does this by requiring pilots to undergo regular medical exams to obtain a medical certificate that gives you, the pilot, the authority to operate a certain type of aircraft. If you are pursuing a sport pilot certificate, you do not need to obtain a medical certificate—you can do what's known as “self-certifying” by evaluating your fitness to fly

and holding a valid driver's license. This relieves you of the need to hold a pilot medical certificate, but it confines you to the limitations of a sport pilot certificate and you may only fly light sport aircraft (see “That's the Ticket,” p. 32).

Unless they're pursuing a sport pilot certificate, student pilots are required to hold a medical certificate if they intend to solo a powered aircraft, that is, fly without an instructor on board. So, before your instructor signs you off to solo, you must have that medical certificate in hand.

That's why we emphatically encourage student pilots to schedule and complete their first FAA medical certification application and appointment with an aviation medical examiner (AME) as soon as they



AVIATION PIONEERS

HECTOR SANTA ANNA

"Life is just like laying out a flight plan for yourself. Know where you're going to go. Know the route that you're going to take. We have a purpose in life."

—After flying 35 missions in a B-17 Flying Fortress over Europe and participating in the Berlin airlift, Santa Anna worked in aviation for the rest of his life, including NASA, the FAA, and the Pentagon.

Types of medical certificates

Third class: Recreational pilots, private pilots, flight instructors. Renewed every 24 to 60 months, depending on the pilot's age at the time of the certificate issuance.

Second class: Airline first officers, charter pilots, all other commercial operations including commercial balloon operations. Renewed every 12 months.

First class: Airline captains, first officers (if required by the airline to hold one). Renewed every six to 12 months, depending on the pilot's age at the time of the certificate issuance.

What doesn't require a medical certificate?

Light sport aircraft: Limited to two seats and 120 knots, LSAs make a fun and affordable alternative for the pilot who doesn't want (or need) to obtain a medical certificate.

Giders, balloons: No medical required for glider pilots at all. None required for balloon pilots unless they are involved in commercial operations (see above).

BasicMed: Want to fly certificated aircraft but not planning to go on to the airlines? Then BasicMed might be your best friend. Complete a one-time medical certificate, fly a Cessna, Piper, or Beechcraft (or other airplane covered by the BasicMed rule), and work with your personal doctor to monitor your health and take a recurrent online course. See aopa.org/basicmed for more information.

dedicated medical certification experts who can help you through the process each step of the way.

Call AOPA at 800-872-2672 *before* you start the MedExpress online application. Walk through the application with one of our specialists before you submit it to the FAA, because once you've done that you cannot change your information.

AOPA is here to help you succeed in your quest to become a pilot. Know that you're not facing this challenge alone—we and thousands of other pilots have been there and know what you're experiencing. AOPA can help you get to where you want to go. 🕒

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start flight training—or even before. There are a few reasons for this.

The examination is routine, similar to what you may have experienced getting a wellness check in your doctor's office. But the AME must review your application and follow up on any current or past medical conditions or medications that the FAA could flag for further review. If there are no concerning conditions or medications, the AME can issue your new certificate right then in the doctor's office—and most of the time, that's what happens.

But sometimes the AME must defer your application for further review by the FAA. Unfortunately, this process can take months to resolve, depending on whether there needs to be additional tests, additional paperwork, or whatever the FAA may deem necessary to render a final decision. FAA's medical certification office in Oklahoma City reviews more than 400,000 medical certificate applications each year—and the staff are struggling with a backlog of applications that shows no signs of being resolved any time soon. If your application gets stuck in that backlog, it could delay your solo (although you can continue flight training with a certificated flight instructor as long as necessary.)

Fortunately, you don't have to do this alone. AOPA has a staff of trained and



AVIATION PIONEERS

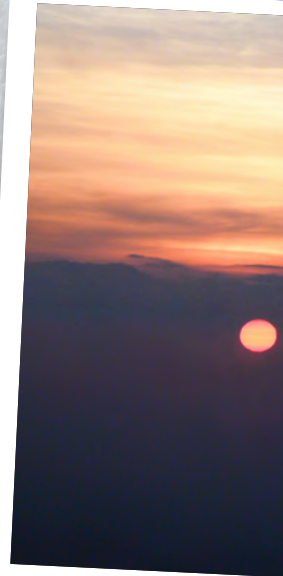
BESSIE COLEMAN

"You've never lived till you've flown!"

—A popular airshow stunt performer in the 1920s, Coleman was the first African American and Native American woman to receive a pilot's license.

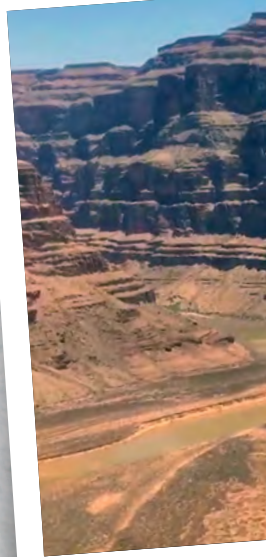
MEMORABLE FLIGHTS

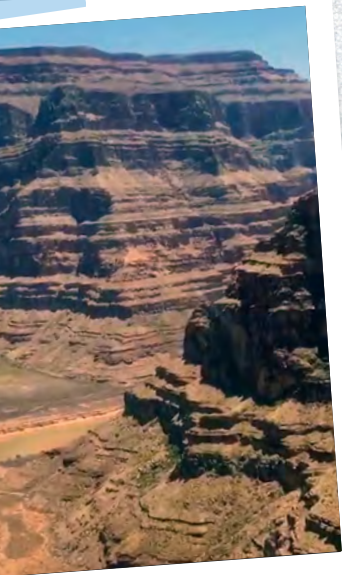
BY JILL W. TALLMAN



Unforgettable

Momentous flights
that you, too,
can experience





Cindy Hasselbring says the opportunity to fly her grandmother to a Thanksgiving family dinner was one of her most memorable flights. Hasselbring and her grandmother flew a Cessna 152. The soaring mountains of the Idaho backcountry near Smiley Creek framed an unforgettable flight for Francine Kelly Garcia. Susan Glisson said flying her first airplane to her home airport for the first time made her feel like a teenager in her first car.



As we are learning to fly, our eyes are always on the prize: the day we're officially turned loose to roam the skies. We're going to go places and do things we've never done—all thanks to an airplane.

What makes a flight truly memorable? Is it the place you're flying to, the reason you're flying, or the person you're flying with? Or is it a combination of those things? The answer is yes—as these enthusiastic pilots explain.

FLYING MILESTONES

"This year, I bought my first airplane [a 1979 Beechcraft Skipper]," said Jilian McLendon, of Kansas City, Missouri. "Going up in that plane for the first time and bringing my dad (who taught me to fly) was one of the best moments of my life! Nothing beats flying with him in that right seat."

Susan Glisson of Evansville, Indiana, recalled a 1997 trip flying her Cessna 150—her first airplane—home from Tennessee. The trip made Glisson feel like a teenager with her first car. During the 12 years she owned the 150, Glisson "flew to practically every airport within 200 miles of my airport. Now I'm the proud owner of a Cessna 172S that has expanded my world and I have flown on many long cross-countries."

For Jim Cunningham of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, going back to the very dawn of aviation made him appreciate his own airplane all the more. He took a ride on a reproduction of the 1902 Wright Glider near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

The glider was the first aircraft to fly with a three-axis flight control system that made human flight over any kind of distance possible—it was the "beta" version of the Wright Flyer that flew the following year. "My mind was racing and I wanted to press a pause button so I could take everything in," Cunningham said.

"I wanted to remember the sight of clear blue sky, the sand, the waves out on the water, and the warm breeze that would govern my flight." Even with 2,000 hours of flight time in his logbook at the time, he said he felt like a brand-new student pilot. "The Wright Glider has controls and characteristics completely unlike a modern aircraft. I had no idea how much control input to give to make the ship even remain stable, let alone do anything else."

FANTASTIC SIGHTS

"I fly floatplanes and have many memories," said Kit Warfield of Seattle, Washington. "A curious seal popping up just as I come in to land. Seeing orca whales from the air. 'Drawing' figure eights on the water, practicing step turns, taking off to admire the artwork. So many memories!"

Picking a memorable flight wasn't hard for Kayla Szymczak of San Antonio, Texas. "The first time I flew in actual instrument meteorological conditions! I was shooting an [instrument] approach into Dayton International Airport working on my instrument rating. The clouds were beautiful and it was so surreal!" Szymczak is now a first officer flying a Saab 340.

Jane Geddes was trying to complete the cross-country requirements for her private pilot certificate in the Pacific Northwest when winter weather set in. "So, I packed up my flight instructor with her IFR rating and we flew from northwest Washington to central California for Thanksgiving weekend where we finished my training and I flew my solo cross-country," Geddes said. "Every flight of that weekend was memorable, but flying over the Golden Gate [Bridge] in late afternoon was remarkable."

STUNNING LOCATIONS

For Francine Kelly Garcia, a trip from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Smiley Creek Airport in the Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho provided "some nerves with the big mountain flying and grass strip, but it turned out to be an easy landing and OMG the scenery! Great experience camping for a weekend with my husband and a bunch of new best friends."

Abingdon Chelsea Mullin said flying a Cessna 170 on skis in Alaska and landing on the Bering Sea provided "a bucket list item I didn't know I had!"

Kimberly Goodrich Mershon of Montgomery, Alabama, piloted her most recent memorable trip in 2022 in her Cessna 210. She flew round trip from Alabama to Flagstaff, Arizona, flying over the Grand Canyon. "On the way there and back we stopped at Kickapoo/Wichita Falls, Texas, Winslow, Arizona, Las Cruces, New Mexico, San Antonio, and Natchez, Mississippi. We have a beautiful country full of beautiful people."



Joe Fox of Silver Spring, Maryland, recalls being a newly minted instrument pilot who was building time when he happened to have a flying club airplane checked out for the whole weekend. He decided to make a trip to Canada—his first time crossing an international border. He used AOPA's cross-border online resources and carefully studied the weather so that he could circumvent some thunderstorms en route. "I had to be careful to focus on the landing and not be distracted by the amazing view of the Toronto skyline on the approach to City Centre (now Billy Bishop) Airport. I called [the Canada Border Services Agency] to get my confirmation number, and took the world's shortest passenger ferry, and walked to my hotel and had a delightful weekend in a city that I have been back to visit many times since."

THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER

Sabina Jaeckel-Engler said her most memorable flights were the ones where she took her children with her for the first time, and also one other: "My oldest passenger on his ninetieth birthday. After we landed, I opened the canopy and he just sat there, silent. I could tell he was processing all the sights we had seen (we were near the ocean). When he finally spoke, he said he should have done it much sooner."

Cindy Hasselbring took her grandmother for a flight less than a year after earning her private pilot certificate. "I flew a 30-minute flight to Lansing, Michigan, from Ann Arbor to pick up my 92-year-old grandma for Thanksgiving...When grandma saw the Cessna 152 I was flying, she said that was the smallest plane (she thought) she had ever flown in. I assured her it probably was. She greatly enjoyed the 30-minute flight, looked out the window most of the time and was fairly quiet, letting me fly. She never seemed nervous, but didn't say very much. After the holiday, my dad drove Grandma home. I was a teacher at the time and two flying trips in one week was more than my budget could handle.

"It wasn't until eight months later, at my grandma's memorial service following a brief illness, that I heard how much she had enjoyed the flight. The pastor shared how much she talked about flying with her granddaughter and how proud she was of me. That meant the world to me as she was always such a special person to me." 🐦

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AVIATION PIONEERS

AMY JOHNSON

"I think it is a pity to lose the romantic side of flying and simply to accept it as a common means of transport."

—Wildly famous in the 1930s for her daredevil flights, Johnson was the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia, England to Japan, and England to South Africa.



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YOU CAN FLY

BY JULIE SUMMERS WALKER

The Lake Shelbyville Flying Club



BUILDING A BETTER FLYING COMMUNITY

More students, more pilots, more clubs because of You Can Fly

More than 400 high schools in 44 states across the country use our aviation STEM curriculum. More than \$5 million in scholarships have been awarded to students, teachers, and CFIs for flight training. More than 10,000 rusty pilots have returned to the skies, and more than 200 flying clubs have been established. All in less than seven years. What is this? It's the You Can Fly initiative, funded by generous donations to the AOPA Foundation.

AOPA realized there was no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to building the pilot community. That's why the association created an umbrella program that allows AOPA to simultaneously pursue several targeted, but different, approaches.

AOPA created programs to support flying clubs, encourage best practices in flight training, get lapsed pilots back

in the air, bring AOPA's resources and expertise to pilot groups across the country, and help high school students learn more about careers in aviation. The goal of You Can Fly is to make flying more accessible and affordable.

Since its inception in 2014, the You Can Fly program has had many big wins. We host visiting educators in a dedicated wing of the association's campus which includes offices, classrooms, simulators, and more. We have received support from major companies including Textron and Williams International, which have contributed to a bright future for general aviation. The James C. Ray Foundation has matched donations to You Can Fly (the You Can Fly program is supported by donations; no AOPA member dues are used in its work). King Schools has also supported the You Can Fly Program. High schools across the country have

adopted our curriculum and built upon their success with capital improvements such as new facilities at Lincoln, Nebraska's North Star High School and others. *Education Week* highlighted the continuous growth of AOPA's curriculum that is being used in high school career and technical education programs in an issue of the 1.6 million-circulation magazine. AOPA's effort to promote aviation-based STEM education has earned acclaim—and national exposure—in recent years from *PBS NewsHour*, *CNN*, *Forbes*, *Scripps*, and other major news sources.

"The You Can Fly High School Aviation STEM Curriculum is a true win-win: It addresses one of the most pressing issues facing the entire aviation industry, and it puts high school students on a solid track to rewarding careers," said Elizabeth Tennyson, senior vice president of You Can Fly and the AOPA Foundation.



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The Flying Clubs team has helped more than 200 clubs get started—and keep flying—since 2014.



AVIATION PIONEERS

WILLIAM “WILD BILL” HOPSON

“The best system of flying bad weather is not so much to go rip roaring through nasty weather, but to use your head for something else besides a hat-rack, and fly where bad weather ain’t.”

—One of the best-loved pioneering airmail pilots of the 1920s, Hopson once set a speed record between Cleveland, Ohio, and Mineola, New York, in three hours.

The You Can Fly programs support AOPA’s promise that promoting the flying community will increase the pilot population.

“One of AOPA’s main pillars is to ensure GA remains viable for generations to come, and that means working to create a brighter future for our industry,” said AOPA President Mark Baker. “The AOPA Foundation does just that. The foundation funds AOPA’s You Can Fly program and the AOPA Air Safety Institute, both of which are vital to building a stronger and safer pilot community.”

For more information on all the You Can Fly programs, visit the website. youcanfly.aopa.org


WHAT IS YOU CAN FLY?

The four pillars of the AOPA You Can Fly program are designed to touch each of the critical phases of flying—getting started, assisting in training, bolstering access, and lifelong support.

High school initiative—You Can Fly designed an aviation curriculum now in place at more than 400 high schools across the country. The four-year aviation program teaches fundamentals, history, and career options in tracks for ninth through twelfth grade students.

Flight training—In addition to programs such as AOPA Flight Training Advantage (AFTA), the You Can Fly program assists and supports students, flight instructors, and flight schools through the Flight Training Experience Survey and Awards, *Flight School Business* newsletter, online resources, and more.

Flying clubs—Now you’re flying, how do you stay in the air? Cost, time, and availability are the downers of a flying life. Joining a flying club helps mitigate those bad guys while having fun and making friends. The Flying Clubs team has helped more than 200 clubs get started—and keep flying—since 2014.

Rusty pilots—And then one day you start over. You Can Fly knows that life circumstances can interrupt a flying life, so we designed an easy program for “rusty” pilots to knock that rust off and get back in the air. We’ve helped more than 10,000 pilots return to the sky. 

The You Can Fly program (including the AOPA High School Aviation STEM Curriculum) and the AOPA Air Safety Institute are funded by charitable donations to the AOPA

Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. To be a part of the solution, visit aopa-foundation.org/donate.



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MEMBERSHIP

BY JULIE SUMMERS WALKER



JOIN US

WHY AN AOPA MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

There are many personal benefits to becoming an AOPA member (see below), but the truth is, it's important to be an AOPA member for reasons that don't just benefit you as an individual. Yep, sometimes membership is more about protecting and defending our freedoms than simply what we get out of it for ourselves. For example, did you know that some countries impose onerous regulations and steep fees on general aviation flying? In most of Europe the fees are so high for everything from landing sites and fuel to licensing that it is prohibitive for many who would like to fly. Sure, it isn't cheap in the United States either, but the freedom to fly is much more attainable here because every day, AOPA staff work to combat proposals that would raise the cost of flying, close airports, and impose onerous restrictions on general aviation flying. Did you also know that the accessibility and availability of general aviation airports in many countries are restrictive? You cannot simply hop in your Cessna 152 and bop around the countryside in China like you can in, say, Ohio.

These freedoms do not come easy. There are many who would like to limit our freedom to fly. Your membership ensures that AOPA's advocacy team in Washington, D.C. keeps our rights protected; your membership ensures that the message of the joy and thrill of flying is told to everyone who will listen; your membership ensures that pilot rights are protected in the courts; and your membership ensures that one day your son or daughter can experience flight as you have. Join us. We need your voice as much as we appreciate your dues.

aopa.org/membership

Great member benefits

- Subscriptions to *AOPA Pilot* or *Flight Training* magazines (digital subscription available).
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- Access to our AOPA Pilot Information Center experts who can answer all your aviation questions from how to pick a flight instructor to how to buy an airplane.
- Online weather, flight planning, and airport information to help you get the most from your flying.
- Free access to the AOPA Flight Training Advantage (AFTA), a flight training system designed to make your training more efficient and cost effective.

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Flying lets you see the world from a whole new perspective—literally. Philipp Steinbach flies a GameBird GB1 near Bentonville, Arkansas. Photography by Mike Fizer



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