

## “I’m Having Trouble With My Flight Instructor”

Time and time again we have attributed the successful training of pilots to the relationship between the CFI and the Client. A *good* Flight Instructor, or CFI, is more than just a pilot who can fly the maneuvers from the right seat. He or she must care about their Clients individually as people. They must find a way to educate each Client in a way that is relevant to that person’s perspective and anticipated utilization of their pilot certificate. There are times however, when the relationship between the CFI and the Client becomes strained. Since flight training is largely about the communication process between two people, which often takes place in a noisy cockpit, this should really come as no surprise. What is surprising, and somewhat troublesome, is that when the Instructor / Client relationship does encounter difficulty, the resolution often is for the CFI to express a resistance to flying with that Client or for the Client to cease contacting the CFI to schedule further training. In either case the Client likely will cease their flight training eventually, a tragic abandonment of opportunity and desire. In this edition of Aero-Tech e-Training we would like to provide suggestions for the resolution of this type of situation. While we recognize that not everyone who begins flight training will become a pilot, it is our goal that the choice to stop flying will not be caused by a problem between a particular CFI and the Client that cannot be resolved.



The key to successfully resolving this kind of challenge is... *more communication!* As Flight Instructors we have to understand that our teaching styles are as diverse as the learning styles of our Clients. If things aren’t going well with a Client we owe it to them to talk about it. In the same way, no CFI worthy of their rating will be offended if a Client brings to their attention a level of dissatisfaction with their Flight Training experience. Often I sense that there is resistance from both parties to having this type of conversation. We have heard that Clients would like to fly with a different CFI but they don’t want to hurt “their” CFI’s feelings. Our response should always be, “Have you talked to them about it?” We can only wonder how many of those who have stopped their training did so because they didn’t want to hurt “their” CFI’s feelings.



In circumstances where communication does occur we often find that there exists a difference of motivations between the Client and the CFI. Many Flight Instructors have trained aggressively toward achieving their professional accomplishments, sometimes with limited financial resources. Often they have felt a certain pressure to maximize efficiency in training and to learn as much as possible during every minute of their lessons. When they become Instructors themselves they are sometimes surprised to learn that not every Client desires that same intensity in their training. They often have to adapt their thinking to allow for the fact that many Clients fly infrequently or irregularly which slows the learning process. And in fact, the *experience* that each Client wishes to have while learning to fly may vary dramatically from person to person. Unless expectations are mutually understood by the CFI and the Client there is bound to be frustration in the cockpit. Communication is the key to understanding each other's expectations.



Even though the relationship between a CFI and a Client is very important the initiation of those relationships is often quite serendipitous. New pilots lack the experience to understand what qualities to look for in a CFI and sometimes feel obligated to train with the first CFI they meet. Some flight schools give little thought to which CFI a Client would work best with and some even use a simple lottery to assign a CFI. By their nature a good CFI will have a desire to share their passion for aviation with others and a relationship with

the Client is built from there. Unfortunately, there are times when all the communication in the world will not resolve the compatibility issues between a CFI and a Client. When this is the case the professional thing to do is to try to identify another CFI whose personality and/or teaching style will be better suited to the Client. A CFI should always support such an endeavor if it is in the best interest of the Client.

We are proud to say that the Flight Instructors and staff at Aero-Tech Services have enjoyed many successful relationships with Clients over the years. That said there is always room to improve on success and we hope that if there is any way we can serve you better, that you will be comfortable bringing it to our attention.