

May 2013



Hello,

My name is Joe Finkelstine and I am one of the many flight instructors at Skymasters.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the **club**.

I would like to introduce you to **how we teach flying at the club**, and offer some helpful suggestions on how to make your learning time most effective. You have started on a trip that will be enjoyable, so let's get started.

To make it certain, flight instruction is available from Skymasters as part of your regular membership. It is always given freely to anyone who asks and it is against club rules to ever charge anyone for teaching. All of us who instruct do so because we enjoy it... we volunteer our time - Flight instruction is available to you even after you get "signed off" - It is still OK to ask for help anytime in your time in the hobby. Sometimes a new plane is best tested by an experienced instructor to help you ease into it. The key for you as a student, and later as a regular pilot is to remember that you are not a bother or an inconvenience to us instructors - we teach because we like it (also, I get to fly all kinds of airplanes besides my own!)

It can often be a bit overwhelming when you first pull up to the field with all your new equipment and there is a group of people already flying and/or putting things together. It is a very normal reaction to sit back and believe you are an interruption to all the activity you see before you. This is quite a normal reaction so we are trying a few things this year to help alleviate this hesitation.

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One of the first questions you may have is who can help me once I get to the field? - First off, anyone can help you on while your plane is on the ground. I hope you will all learn firsthand that the vast majority of pilots at the club are more than happy to help a newcomer, regardless of if they are an "instructor" or not - Each and every one of us remembers the help we received ourselves and we carry that forward. When your plane is near ready to go, is the point where we need to get an instructor involved.

This year, we have instituted 3 styles of instructors. One level are instructors who are assigned to help students prepare to fly and focus on insuring the plane is airworthy and ready to go. You will find these instructors immensely helpful. They will additionally help keep your plane and all your equipment in airworthy condition. I think this is a great development at the club and is one I think you will all come to appreciate.

The next two tiers of instructor's are the ones who can take your airplane up in the air and work with you on instructing during actual flight. To also be certain here, any instructor that is involved with actually flying you has been vetted out by the club chief flight instructor. He/she is fully capable of handling your plane.

Besides actually flying, an additional issue that the ground instructor can help you with are the field rules. The vast majority of the field rules are in place for safety.

One key differentiator from a formal RC field like Skymasters vs. an open field in the park somewhere is the relative safety of the pilots and spectators. At an open field, it is often a free for all with minimal separation between people and things that fly. Besides airplanes, I also fly helicopters and I have stopped going to several open fields because of these safety concerns.

All of the club instructors are obligated to point out issues when we see safety violations. Please understand that when we ask you to do (or not do) something, it is almost always from a safety concern, although we also have field etiquette issues for time to time. It is not reasonable to assume any student would know all of these rules and this is why we do our best to explain them, but sometimes we need to reinforce them or catch up with a missed one or two with you. Don't take it personal, even we instructors get reminded when we forget! I would highly encourage you to ask about how things work and why we have what may appear to be strange rules

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When you are flying with an instructor, the vast majority of instructors utilize a "buddy box" style of instruction be utilized, unless the student's equipment precludes this (rare). This method involves the use of two transmitters. The instructor holds one, and the student the other. At all times, the instructor has command of a spring loaded switch that he/she will toggle on to give the student control, and when immediate correction is needed, the instructor simply releases the switch and gains immediate control of the student plane to prevent a crash or other problem using the transmitter in their own hands. This immediate transfer allows for great safety, and equally important, keeps the student's plane safe as well as out of the repair shop. The club maintains a good collection of "spare" transmitters to allow for this buddy box method, so you don't have to worry about acquiring a second transmitter.

We have many instructors at the club and it should come as no surprise that we each have a unique way of instructing. Some instructors are relatively quiet while you fly preferring to discuss the flight once you land. Others are chatty (me!) all the time while you fly, while most others are somewhere in between. As a student, you will have a natural way you like to interact with an instructor. The key point here is that you do not have to stay with a single instructor. None of the instructor's will take it personally if you choose to continue on with another instructor - In fact, I encourage my students to

fly with other instructors all the time. The value of flying with different instructors is that each one will have unique perspectives and useful insights for you. Trust me on this one, I fall into the chatty instructor class and I have driven several students away.

This year, the club has dedicated Wednesday afternoons/evenings for students, but **students are welcome anytime**, not just Wednesday's. The only thing that differentiates Wednesdays from other times is that the club insures we have lots of instructors at the field on Wednesday's and that we dedicate several flight stations to them. For example, I fly on Sunday afternoons (Unless the Finkelstine CEO, i.e. the wife, has other plans for me) and often teach there. Students are welcome anytime, although, the club can't guarantee an instructor will always be there other than Wednesdays. The field is a popular destination on the weekends though. You will often find instructors at the field at these times. It might be a good idea for you as a student to also work out a schedule with a particular instructor that would benefit you both - perhaps you both have Tuesday afternoons free

One of the ways to visually see an instructor is by some article of clothing we wear. If memory serves me correctly here, this year we get new Shirts. Many of us, including me, wear an old beat up Skymasters flight instructor baseball hat that is older than many of you students. My hat actually says "Skymasters Flight Instructor", so that's a good way to spot one! We do our best to come up and introduce ourselves, **but I would encourage you to take the initiative to seek us out as well.** One way or another, it is vital that we know you are a student and you need us to work with you to get in the air. The alternative is to sit and watch - that is not fun at all

The last few points I will make here are some of the most fundamental.

Remember that this is a hobby and that everyone around you is offering help as a volunteer.

Getting your pilot's license is *not a race* and that it is OK if it takes you several months, or even a few seasons. Even after 15+ years in this hobby, I still enjoy taking a plane or helicopter up to just fly around practicing the same maneuvers my instructor had me do long ago.

Again, welcome to the club and please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions

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