



## Making the Most of the Flight Review (Part II – Flight)

By Elaine Kauh

If you have conducted enough Flight Reviews as a CFI, you'll know that they're a lot like landings – no two are alike.

Or are they? Hopefully, instructors recognize that while Flight Reviews can be similar in content (takeoffs and landings, etc.), no two pilots are alike – and so their recurrent training should take this into consideration. A 'cookie-cutter' review that takes 2.0 hours -- the regulatory minimums of one hour of ground instruction and one hour of flight instruction -- is likely to be a disservice to the pilot. Moreover, conducting this kind of Flight Review repeatedly is less than rewarding for the instructor and doesn't encourage the continual improvement of teaching skills. So it's a win-win for everyone to plan each Flight Review as one would plan an individual flight – considering flight operations, routes, recent experience, and weather conditions. Also, think of your goals as the instructor: You want to *educate*, *evaluate*, and *emphasize* those areas that need recurrent training.

The ground portion of the Flight Review will have covered a good discussion of flight planning and decision making. (See *Making the Most of the Flight Review, Part I -- Ground*). Much like the Practical Test Standards, you should have the pilot use real-time weather to make a go/no-go decision with his actual personal minimums. If the pilot hasn't been keeping up with regular assessments of his decision making, this is the time to review the concept and recommend an ongoing Personal Minimums Checklist.

The flight portion can go well beyond a basic review of textbook maneuvers, like steep turns. Use the PTS as a general starting point for what you want to do in flight. Then tailor your session to go beyond it -- the learning opportunities are endless. Have the pilot list some flight operations he wants to work on. If he hasn't thought of at least a couple of items, you'll be sure to have some good ideas of your own!

No matter how long the pilot has been flying, you'll find that there's always something she hasn't seen before – whether it's a new way to practice a maneuver or a technical flaw you observe that she should work on. A few examples:

- Can the pilot follow the proper procedures for two simultaneous, simulated emergencies and bring the aircraft to a safe landing? Emergency training often plays too small a role in flight instruction and pilot practice. Make sure the pilot includes regular passenger



- briefings and self-practice for emergencies in his flying. It could save lives.
- Has the pilot recently flown instrument approaches partial panel, or with different types of simulated IFR emergencies?
  - Has the pilot developed (or always had) complacency with the rudder on takeoffs, climb outs, and other maneuvers?
  - Has the pilot actually (or recently) performed a real short-field or soft-field takeoff and landing, and preplanned that takeoff and landing using performance calculations?
  - How about an accuracy landing, in which the pilot must land on a chosen spot on the runway, and execute a low-level go-around if he won't make that spot?
  - Does the pilot have experience with accelerated stalls, autopilot stalls, stalls with the instruments covered up, or stalls while under the hood?
  - Has the pilot flown steep turns beyond 45 degrees of bank?
  - For private pilots, would it be fun and educational to learn some commercial maneuvers, such as chandelles or eights-on-pylons?
  - Did the pilot ever learn the steep spiral? (I learned this maneuver in my Private training, but haven't seen this used regularly.)

If the weather or other factors fall outside of the pilot's personal minimums, there are still some options to provide high-quality flight training based on the conditions for that day. Some suggestions for less-than-ideal weather:

- If the winds exceed the pilot's personal limits, go flying! Assuming the conditions are still within your own limits and you are acting as instructor and PIC, this is the time to provide great instruction for takeoffs, landings, ground tracking, and other maneuvers. For instrument pilots, consider flying a holding pattern or an approach in a stiff crosswind. Hopefully, the pilot has experienced strong or gusty winds during his early training. If not, or if he has avoided winds over 10 knots for quite a while, this is definitely a learning opportunity. The idea isn't to make the pilot change his personal minimums; it's to expose him to real-world conditions, demonstrate real-life decision making, and challenge him to use the skills he has.
- If the weather is MVFR but still within your own limits as the instructor, go flying! While you likely won't have the altitude or



visibility to fly all of the maneuvers you originally planned, set those aside for another time and have the pilot navigate using pilotage and nav aids, and if practical, have him divert to better weather or to another airport. Again, we hope pilots have been exposed to 3-5 SM visibility during their initial training. But if they haven't, this will be a memorable learning experience.

As far as evaluating the pilot, the Practical Test Standards are minimums. As with all training, pilots should be encouraged to fly to the highest possible standards every time. I like the idea of striving for altitude within 20 feet, airspeed within 3 knots, etc. Again, be sure to discuss what's appropriate before flying.

When you've completed the flight, remember that no lesson is complete without the post-flight briefing. As the FAA puts it, the post-flight discussion should be a "*collaborative critique*" to pave the way for future training. Make sure the pilot does some of the talking to self-assess how she did on each task and what she wants to continue to work on. Each of you should keep notes on these areas and write down goals for the upcoming weeks and months.

The Flight Review can draw on some of the same materials and subjects that are used for a checkride, but it should not mirror a practical test and it is not a pass/fail process – pilots need not treat it as such. Having said that, the instructor must decide when he'll sign off the Flight Review endorsement in the pilot's logbook. How do you decide? Sometimes, you need to wear a couple of hats -- think like a CFI recommending a student pilot for a test, and then think like the examiner:

- Did she meet the completion standards you required under conditions within her personal limits, without verbal or physical intervention from you? If she made any errors, were they questionable in terms of safety? Did she detect and correct them right away, or repeat the operation to standards?
- Can the pilot safely fly as PIC in reasonable conditions, without undue manipulation of personal minimums? For example, any Sport, Recreational, or Private pilot should be proficient in crosswind landings with winds around 8 knots. That's what I would expect with solo student pilots, and I would recommend some crosswind training for a pilot who states that he won't be able to fly with a 5-knot crosswind.



- Did the pilot demonstrate that she is capable of safely acting as Pilot in Command while carrying passengers and addressing distractions, decisions, and simulated malfunctions or emergencies?

Pilots who don't demonstrate proficiency during a Flight Review will require multiple ground and/or flight sessions to obtain the endorsement. This is common for pilots who have been out of flying for several years or more. In this case, tailor a training schedule and a syllabus for him to complete the Flight Review. He will appreciate the structure and individual attention you're giving him.

Keep in mind that the Flight Review should be designed as a learning event focused on safety and proficiency. Remember to *educate*, *evaluate*, and *emphasize* skills to keep practicing. If your pilots have the right mindset, they will treat the Flight Review as one more step in the learning journey - and return in the coming months to keep improving their knowledge and skills.

Sources:

Federal Aviation Administration, *Conducting an Effective Flight Review*, 2006.

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