



RECREATIONAL  
AVIATION AUSTRALIA

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Recreational Student Pilot

The most important part of any flight training operation is the student, as without them we are just a bunch of experienced pilots looking for someone to share the joy of flight with. This chapter looks at the recreational student in some detail, with the aim for instructors to understand how our students will differ.

Some students may have further career aspirations for military or flying jets, or they may be the person who has always wanted to fly just for fun. For instructors starting out, this chapter will explore how to deliver an effective method of training across a broad range of age and personality types. Additionally we will further explore the modern training environment and the social and cultural pressures that beset the student pilot.



### Motivations

The RAAus training environment is fundamentally different to other areas of aviation training. The students' motivation to learn to fly may be based on the desire to fly purely for recreational pleasure. Changes to the sporting and general aviation landscape now offer a broad scope for utilisation of the Recreational Pilot Certificate, ranging from 3 Axis types, Weightshift microlight and Powered Parachutes and home built variations.

These types can be operated with significant additional privileges rivaling the traditional Private Pilot License and may be further integrated into private or commercial licensing under new CASA regulations. Our approach to training the recreational pilot needs to address this diversity and intent appropriately.

It is important that the instructor gain a clear understanding of the potential student's motivations for learning to fly as well as gain an insight into any background exposure to flight, and any factors which may be influencing the desire to undertake flight training.

The instructor should be aware of the student's personal, work and family circumstances and discuss these openly in terms of commitment, influence and the practical aspects of learning to fly.

### Industry fit

The general recreational social environment is changing also as society now looks to different leisure activities for fulfillment. Traditional sports and activities exist and compete alongside a vastly different array of recreational pursuits. Cultural activities, physical programs, adventure sports and more now blur the lines between sports, fun and work.

The choices available to the general public are far greater today than even twenty years ago and the aspiring recreational pilot may be torn between numerous pursuits and the enjoyment they receive from other different interests. It is important to establish the priorities of the student particularly in the learning phase where currency and recency have a big impact on learning and progress.

## Pilot demographics

The different backgrounds of students bring a vast array of student types, and these students are not filtered through pre-selection or vocational guidelines as for military or commercial candidates. Additionally, through our GYFTS program recreational flight training is seen as a safe, accessible and fun way for young ambitious pilots to start their flying career. Names such as Matt Hall, Ryan Campbell, Joseph Masters, Lachlan Smart and Holly Adams are just a few of the personalities who built their foundations in recreational flight through RAAus and continue to leave their mark on the aviation landscape.

The door is open far wider for recreational pilots, from hard working parents, professionals, career pilots, baby boomers and retirees. The student who presents with the motivation and desire to fly will have their own unique abilities and level of commitment.

The successful RAAus instructor must understand and tap into these motivations to ensure success. The students' style of learning, underpinned by their learning styles may also include complex layers of socialisation that need to be understood.

Young students are often immune to consequence and may be highly goal motivated, while mature students may be less focused and be more aware of their mortality and may struggle to understand new concepts. These are just some of the unique challenges facing the recreational flight instructor.



### Medical requirements

A defining difference in training requirements for the Recreational Pilot Certificate (RPC) is the required medical standard. For students under 75 this is a self-declared equivalency to the Australian Driver Licence health standard as required in the RAAus Operations Manual.

It is imperative that instructors are familiar with Operations Manual requirements, and notifiable medical conditions. Any existing medical conditions or medications must be discussed, assessed and disclosed prior to starting flight training. Of particular note in this area is the use of reading correction glasses and the impacts on depth perception in flight environments.

Other items such as vertigo, obesity, allergies, cognitive degeneration or other degenerative conditions may impact on the performance and or suitability to undertake flight training. Ongoing fitness using part of a daily preflight assessment checklist such as IMSAFE must also be integrated into training and standardised student behaviors.

### Weight and ergonomics

Our recreational aircraft vary significantly as both classrooms and ergonomic cockpit layouts. Whilst RAAus 3 axis aircraft may have relatively similar cockpit layouts to other general aviation aircraft, RAAus weight shift aircraft such as trikes and powered parachutes offer relatively limited seating and structures.

All aircraft have restrictions on a variety of factors including seat weight limits and physical restrictions that may hinder or prevent effective and safe flight training. These elements need to be carefully and fully explained to potential student pilots and explored appropriately to ensure suitability for training.

*"There is no sport equal to that which aviators enjoy while being carried through the air on great white wings." Wilbur Wright*

## Training schedules

In most cases the recreational student pilot flight training schedule will often be juggled in between work, education, family and social commitments.

These represent a substantial barrier to training processes in contrast to other general and professional aviation training environments. Consideration must be given to these limitations in regard to scheduling training appointments with considerations including school operating times and instructor availability.

It is also becoming evident that the time commitment given to training by students is changing with social trends towards 'drive in-drive out' solutions with flight training competing for other ventures in busy lifestyles, where in the past the enthusiastic student would mingle and absorb additional learning spending the whole day at the airfield.

Efficient planning, structuring of lessons and professional commitment by the instructor are key ingredients to help delivery of an effective flight training plan. Appropriate scheduling must be provided to give the student maximum learning potential in any environment.





## Learning in the age of electronic media

In today's modern world information flows like water through the web and the majority of candidates are tapped into technology.

We can no longer ignore the enormous amount of influence that information will have on the student pilot.

Web based training resources like video how to guides and online forums can provide freely given advice and recommendations with little care or consideration as to accuracy or application.

The opportunity to be influenced with information has never been greater and while this creates enormous opportunities for pilots it also presents real and present threats.

Schools and instructors aware of the possibilities of the information age can prepare controlled online presentations to support school based learning. Careful scrutiny may be required for any unsanctioned learning channels.

As RAAus develops its Learning Management System (LMS) and training resources the ability to direct effective learning support through web based resources will improve.

For now, instructors should carefully review any information or resource material that the student uses and ensure that the primary teaching role still rests with the instructor and not the World Wide Web.

