



RECREATIONAL  
AVIATION AUSTRALIA

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Common Student & Instructor Faults

This chapter introduces the most common faults of Instructors and students and is presented to ensure newly approved Instructors avoid these mistakes, and provide existing Instructors with the opportunity to review their performance to ensure these faults have not crept in over time.

Human nature makes some mistakes inevitable. After all, even though students may believe otherwise, Instructors are not infallible.



## Common Student & Instructor Faults

Because learning to fly is a unique experience, the student pilot is on a relatively steep learning curve and errors can be expected. Our work, as Instructors, is to correct these errors and ensure that errors do not develop into bad habits.

During the Principle and Methods of Instruction (PMI), we learnt that it is important to 'Teach it Right, First Time'. This Law of Primacy is the first step in ensuring that the student is taught the right thing in the first place. Our demonstrations must be delivered correctly and accurately first time and the Instructor must fly consistently when demonstrating any element.

Most importantly errors must be corrected immediately if the correction is to be effective. For example, if the student fixates on the instruments and this is only remarked upon during de-brief, it will not be as effective as if it is corrected while airborne, when it occurs.

Occasionally a student may come to the lesson with pre-conceived ideas. These ideas may lead to errors occurring during a flight. The Instructor will need to exercise patience when explaining and demonstrating the correct technique or procedure. Perhaps the worst fault that a student can have is when it is due to an instructional fault. After all, students don't know what they don't know!

The thinking flight Instructor will constantly revise and review their performance to ensure it results in the best possible learning experience for the student.

### Relevant and consistent language

Student faults can develop if the Instructor fails to adequately explain what is happening, at the time it is happening. This is why a pattern guide as provided in Chapter 5 can be invaluable to ensure the flight Instructor uses consistent language that enables the student pilot to 'learn'. If reference is made during the pre-flight briefing to 'pitching the nose', use of alternative terms in the cockpit such as 'raise or drop the nose' should be avoided.

### Too much pattern

There are plenty of times when the Instructor should remain silent and give the student an unrestricted go. The student should be given the opportunity to recognise faults, analyse their performance and self-correct. This assists the student to develop 'In-Command' skills, which will be more easily achieved if given the opportunity to show these skills whilst being monitored during the practice of the sequence.

### Inconsistency of training at a school

The real world example provided in this section gives insight into a common problem at schools where multiple Instructors operate. An Instructor at this school may have taught one specific way, using language and terms learned from a specific Instructor trainer or CFI, where the next Instructor uses slightly different terms and language. This issue results in, as an example a student at a school having persistent problems rounding out during landings. The problem was identified as their first Instructor telling the student to only flare when the ground rush could be seen under the nose of the aircraft. The student was able to progress normally when the next Instructor advised the student to look further ahead during the flare.

To prevent this from occurring the CFI must conduct regular flights with all Instructors, along with regular group meetings with all Instructors and the CFI about students and their progress. The CFI must ensure this type of problem does not occur and must advise and ensure all Instructors at the school are teaching using similar language and consistent terms, both for pre-flight briefings and in-flight pattern. All Instructors at the school must agree on common terms and techniques, or the student's progress will suffer. The CFIs decision must be the last word in these situations as they are ultimately responsible to RAAus Operations for the standards of training at the school.

### Common Instructor faults

- Not providing a formal pre-flight briefing.
- Pre-flight briefing too long and too complex.
- Pre-flight briefing not focused on the forthcoming flight and what the student can expect.
- Pre-flight briefing not mentioning airmanship and safety checks.
- Not setting out the aim and expected outcome of the flight.
- Not checking the student has an understanding of all elements of the briefing.
- Not providing handouts or checklists.
- Not ensuring the student is comfortable, can reach the controls and see.
- Taxiing too fast.

## Common Student & Instructor Faults

- No pre-take off checks, not using a check list or applying professional discipline to use of checks.
- Not using clear and recommended radio calls.
- Not patterning actions during take-off, climb, track to training area and level out or return.
- Trying to brief the student in the air.
- Using abrupt and disconcerting control movements.
- Inconsistent language, phrases and terms.
- Not being aware of where student is looking.
- Not ensuring the student is holding the controls correctly.
- Incorrect explanation of how to assess aircraft attitude against the background.
- Incorrect explanation of how to assess aircraft attitude against the background.
- Not using consistent terms from the briefing to in flight demonstrations.
- Not allowing enough student participation or handling of controls.
- Not referring to elements of the pre-flight briefing.
- Not monitoring the student to ensure they are comfortable or feeling unwell.
- Not demonstrating airmanship.
- Hovering over the controls or making control inputs without telling the student.

### **Note:**

These are common instructor faults which have been observed during instructor check flights. The professional Instructor will remain aware every action and flight must be carried out as if the world was observing and ensure these habits do not creep into their flights with students (Or even during private flights!).

### Common student faults

- Not participating in the briefing.
- Not asking questions.
- Not making their own notes.
- Not sitting comfortably in the cockpit.
- Not telling the Instructor they aren't comfortable.
- Not concentrating on the lesson.
- Not acknowledging Handing over/Taking over procedure.
- Not relating performance to attitude.
- Looking at nose instead of horizon.
- Gripping controls too tightly and/or exerting too much pressure on rudder pedals.
- Focusing too much on instruments.
- Not concentrating on external references.
- Using abrupt and jerky control movements.
- Not advising instructor when feeling unwell.

**Note:**

These fairly common student faults are easily recognised and dealt with by the professional and observant Instructor.