

FAQ About Instruction

Are gliders safe? Yes. You can solo a glider when you're 14 years old, long before you can get a driver's license. Glider pilots are regulated by the FAA, just as airplane and helicopter pilots are. In fact gliders, airplanes, and helicopters are defined by the FAA as three different categories of aircraft.

Do you have to know how to fly airplanes first? No. Since gliders are a separate category of aircraft, you are trained in gliders, and your pilot license is a license to fly gliders. Having an airplane license doesn't allow you to climb into a glider and fly it. Airplane pilots are required to obtain an additional license to fly gliders and vice versa.

How long does it take to learn to fly gliders? This is a difficult question to answer because it depends on many variables, such as, your age, how frequently you can fly, whether or not you are willing to study on your own, and the weather. Other factors include your degree of self-confidence and whether or not you have any anxiety about flying to overcome. However, a student taking one lesson each week can expect to solo in three months. About 35 to 45 flights is average.

Almost anyone can learn to fly. The requirements are simple: be willing to work; have a burning desire to fly; don't give up. Learning to fly is not especially hard, but it's not easy either. Some pilots like to say, "If it were easy, everyone would do it." Developing the skills to fly proficiently is only part of learning to fly. Another part is aeronautical knowledge on subjects like, aerodynamics, weather, and regulations among others. Another part is developing good judgment and decision-making skills while flying.

How quickly you solo isn't important. What is important is that you learn everything you need to be a safe and competent pilot. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a list that must be completed before solo flight can be authorized. This list addresses both aeronautical knowledge and flight proficiency.

What are the costs involved in learning to fly gliders? There are three costs. 1. You will pay for the rental of the glider. You are charged for the time you and your instructor actually fly the glider – from take off to landing. 2. You pay for the tow, which is charged by altitude of the tow. The higher you go on tow, the higher the cost. 3. You pay for your scheduled time with your flight instructor. For example, if you scheduled between 10:00 and 12:00, you pay for two hours with the instructor.

How much does it cost to learn to fly? That's another question that is virtually impossible to answer. How much time and how many flights you have to make depend on several things. Your age, how frequently you can fly, your self-confidence, how comfortable you are in the air, your willingness to study on your own, and the soaring conditions during the time you are learning to fly.

How long is a flight lesson? Some flights will be short, for example, practicing take-offs and landings. Other flights will be longer, practicing maneuvers and soaring techniques. You might fly as long as an hour if soaring conditions are good. Sometimes when you fly, there won't be any lift (updrafts) so flights won't be longer than 20 minutes.

When you begin instruction, you are bombarded by new experiences, and you can't fly very long before becoming overloaded. During most instructional sessions, you will fly two flights. If you are practicing take-off and landings, you may make several flights. Each instructional session usually includes ground instruction along with flight instruction.

Is ground instruction required? Yes. Both flight and ground instruction are required. Often, you will have a ground instruction session prior to your flight instruction session. By studying on your own and doing the reading assignments given to you by your flight instructor, you can cut down on the time spent doing ground instruction with your instructor. Your instructor will give you a pre-flight briefing before each flight. (One lesson may have more than one flight.) He or she will discuss with your learning objectives for the flight and give you the information you need about new maneuvers before practicing them. Also, your instructor will give you a post-flight briefing after every flight. In the post-flight briefing, the instructor

evaluates and critiques your flying. He will let you know what you're doing well and what you need to change.

How much flight time is required to solo? There is no minimum time requirement to solo. You must meet the FAA's requirements for knowledge and skill before you can solo. You must also prove that you will exercise good judgment. You must take a written test administered by your flight instructor. In addition, you must have a student license. The FAA issues the student license free of charge.

Being soloed allows you to fly on your own, under the supervision of your flight instructor. Your flight instructor will endorse you to solo. The endorsement is good for a maximum of 90 days. After 90 days, you must be re-endorsed to continue solo flights. You can not take passengers with you.

What's required to get a license? In order to earn a private glider license (airman certificate), you must solo and accumulate ten solo flights and two hours of solo time.

Next, you must take a FAA knowledge test. The knowledge test is taken at a computer testing facility. A 70% score is required to pass. Your flight instructor must sign a written statement (endorsement) that you are prepared to take the test. You do not have to solo to take the knowledge test. But, you do have to take it before you can take your check ride (practical test) to get your airman certificate.

Finally, you must take a practical test. The practical test can be given by a FAA inspector or a designated pilot examiner (a pilot authorized by the FAA to give the practical test). The practical test will evaluate your aeronautical knowledge and flight proficiency against a set of standards (practical test standards) developed by the FAA. For a student pilot (not already rated in airplanes or helicopters) to take the practical test, he or she must have flown at least ten hours (solo time and flight instruction time) and made at least twenty training flights. In addition, your flight instructor must endorse you to take the practical test and he or she must make three flights with you to prepare you for the test. These flights must be made within 60 days of the day of the practical test.

What's required for a licensed pilot to get a glider rating? There are no minimum requirements for flight training time or training flights to solo. You must receive flight and ground instruction on the areas specified in the FAR's to solo. And, you must be able to safely solo a glider. How much flight instruction you require to solo will depend on your flight proficiency, currency, how willing you are to accept that there are some important differences between gliders and airplanes, the weather, and your age. Some pilots are able to solo in about ten flights; most require more training. You can cut down on ground instruction time by studying on your own.

Your glider rating will be an additional rating on your airman certificate. It is more involved than checking out in another model airplane.

To add-on a private glider rating. You must log three hours of flight time in a glider, make ten solo flights, and make three training flights to prepare for the practical test, and be endorsed by your flight instructor to take the practical test. The FAA knowledge test is not required.

Your private license allows you to take passengers with you. They may not pay you to fly, but they can share expenses on a pro-rated basis.

To add a commercial glider rating onto a commercial airman certificate. You must log three hours of flight training in a glider or ten training flights. Make twenty flights in a glider as pilot in command. Make five solo flights in a glider. You must make three flights with an instructor to prepare for the practical test within 60 days of the test date, and be endorsed by your flight instructor to take the practical test. The FAA knowledge test is not required.

The commercial license allows you to fly for hire.

What happens on the practical test? The examiner or inspector will follow the Practical Test Standards (PTS) for the rating you are seeking. The PTS lists all the knowledge areas that you are expected to know. It also lists the maneuvers you must perform along with how precisely you must perform them (performance standards).

The examiner will test you on aeronautical knowledge by sitting down with you and asking you questions. He will then fly with you to check your flight proficiency -- you will demonstrate the required maneuvers during this part of the practical test. He can also continue to ask you questions while you're flying. Good judgment and decision making skills are just as important as aeronautical knowledge and flight proficiency. You must demonstrate both good judgment and good decision making skills during the practical test.

How difficult is the FAA knowledge test? The FAA knowledge test is a comprehensive test, touching on all areas and aspects of flying gliders. There are questions about aerodynamics, weather, weight and balance, FAR's (Federal Aviation Regulations), the different classes of airspace, using an aeronautical chart, flying cross-country, emergency procedures, take off, flying the glider on tow, landing, the various maneuvers, different forms of lift (updrafts) and how to use them, among many other topics. The good news is that there is a study book to help prepare for the test.

Is there a charge for the practical test? If you take the practical test with a FAA inspector (employed by the FAA), there is no charge. If you take the practical test with a designated examiner, there is a charge. The examiner at Dillingham currently charges \$250.

Is there an age limit for flying gliders? The minimum age to solo a glider is 14, and the minimum age to have a private license is 16. There is no maximum age limit. At Honolulu Soaring, we have soloed people ranging in age from 14 to 79.

Is a medical examination required? A medical examination, or flight physical, is not required for glider pilots. However, the FAR's prohibit pilots from flying if they know they have a medical condition which would make them unsafe to fly.