

CFI to CFI

Teaching Flight Maneuvers

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The maneuvering phase of flight training is designed to develop hands-on flying skills and to build the student's confidence in his or her ability to safely handle the airplane. According to the annual Nall Report, most fatal accidents occur during maneuvering flight outside of flight instruction. Therefore, it is imperative that flight instructors teach beyond the minimal requirements for passing a checkride and ensure their students master the key subjects and skills of maneuvering flight.

The demonstration-performance teaching method is well suited for developing physical and mental skills. The five essential phases of this process are:

- Preparation;
- Explanations;
- Demonstrations;
- Student performance; and
- Instructor supervision and evaluation.

The preparation phase takes place before the student shows up for the lesson. The instructor should develop a plan of action for the particular flight based upon the student's previous experience and any time or weather constraints. The instructor's plan should maximize time spent in the training session by placing the maneuvers to be performed in the most logical sequence.

Before the flight, the instructor provides a thorough explanation of the lesson's elements. The instructor describes the performance objectives and breaks down each maneuver to be performed into steps. To facilitate the learning process, the instructor relates new material to previous experiences the student has had. Safety concerns and common errors are also a part of the pre-flight discussion.

While the instructor is demonstrating, the student must listen and observe. Instructor demonstrations are a major part of the learning process. While it is good to be concerned, the instructor should never skip the demonstration step because of feelings that they may be wasting the student's time or money. During the demonstration, the instructor should describe the actions he or she is taking to accomplish it. If necessary, the student may demonstrate the maneuver again while the student describes the steps.

The student must have plenty of time to repeatedly practice the maneuver. The student should carry out the skill under close supervision and describing each step before it is taken. This allows the instructor to better evaluate the student's understanding and application of the new skill. Some students may find it hard to talk as they fly the airplane, but with time, this technique becomes comfortable and a valuable learning experience.

The instructor may need to make suggestions to the student as he or she is flying. Preventing bad habits from developing is much easier than trying to break them later on.

As the student performs the maneuver, the instructor is silently supervising and evaluating. Taking notes while the student practices can be very useful during the post flight briefing. At the end of the lesson, the instructor should critique the student's performance based on the objectives described at the beginning of the lesson. Critiques are a part of the learning process. They should provide the student with suggestions and encouragement so that he or she can better perform the maneuver on a later lesson.