THE KID BROTHER RULE

Before you choose a flight school – or if you are considering changing schools – think about the “Kid Brother Rule”. (aka, the “Kid Sister Rule”) That is, if you had an older brother that was an experienced pilot, what do you wish he’d tell you before you start?

ANSWER: Consider three critical issues.

“When I started to learn to fly, I was 68 years old. Never should have waited that long; I had no idea what I was missing. However, looking back now, I have a short list of things that I wish I’d known from the beginning. God, I wish I’d known these questions – and the answers to them.”

--- Tom Noon, founder, Leopard Aviation

The three CSF (Critical Success Factors) in choosing a flight school are:

#1. **BE PICKY.** Picking a flight instructor (a “CFI”) is a critical consideration. It is not like picking a teacher in college. In college, you get whichever teacher is teaching that class. Flight instruction is a much more intimate
relationship. The best instructor is one that can adjust to the learning dynamics of his/her students and those dynamics vary between students. The CFI needs to teach the way you learn – PERIOD -- this is made all the more important because he/she is not only teaching facts but also a physical skill involving hand/eye coordination. It’s something like learning to throw darts and also learning about the aerodynamics of darts. One is physical, the other is mental. Our instructors are sensitive to these issues. We are picky in whom we choose to instruct you – and every aspect of the teaching process.

It's not just: “Hire an instructor. Got the CFI license? Great. Go.” A CFI that may make a great airline pilot someday is not necessarily one that will be a great CFI. It takes people-skills combined with an astute sense for the plane. It takes a good listener and a great person at explaining. It takes patience – not everyone learns at the same pace. With some, long lessons will overwhelm; with others, short lessons will frustrate them. With some, you can talk too much while flying; with others, they enjoy the frequent inputs from the instructor. It’s a creative process – one style doesn’t fit all.

And, it ain’t the job of the student to adjust; it’s the job of a great instructor.

#2. CHOOSE THE BEST to LEARN THE BEST.

Choose the best equipment to learn the best. First, learn in planes that are fun to fly!! And, insist on planes that are designed for training – with a “big sweet spot”. Like a great beginner tennis racket, the plane needs to be forgiving, to allow for being “off-center” a lot. The CESSNA 172 is a very easy plane to learn flying; it has a really large sweet spot.

And, learn in planes that are as close to current technology as possible. Newer planes are: (a) in better condition/safer, (b) have most modern technology, and (c) are the most fun to fly. Current technology is the Garmin G1000. These system are also known as “glass cockpits”. Not only is current technology safer due to their systems for proximity awareness
and backup systems, but they are also what you will find in commercial planes when you are hired by the airlines.

#3. MAKE MISTAKES. You will learn from your mistakes. Don’t be afraid of making mistakes!! – expect them to occur!! Take this from us:

“You will learn more from your mistakes than your successes.” – Ralph Dalio.

It is a good day flying when you’ve run across something that you’ve never experienced before, get it wrong, and learn how to handle it…. The more this happens, the fewer things that you’ve never seen happen in an airplane. You want that, buddy.