

Male Flight Instructor Survey - Additional Open-ended Survey Responses:

Even though the situation is improving, we are not there yet. I still see the major aviation and aviation training publications referring to pilots generically as “he.” Much of the marketing for flight training contains a variation of the message that aviators either are or should be men. The messages are often subtle, and some not so much.

If a student drops out of flight training, at a minimum, a survey/questionnaire should be sent to them to find out why. But, better yet, a personal follow-up phone call. There DOES need to be a “Keep Flying” help-line or maybe a non-profit Yahoo group. One thing you almost NEVER hear at a flight school is “How are you doing?” There is very little ongoing encouragement. Also, family and friends do not understand nor give encouragement. “Oh, you’re interested in airplanes. Are you going to be a stewardess?”

Women need someone to talk WITH and who understands or at least listens.

Women lack experience with mechanical things. Guys have been taking alarm clocks apart from when they were five years old. Sometimes, they even get them back together again.

Boys often build and fly aircraft models. I do not think that I have met even one woman in my life that did that.

Women will express their fears and trepidations, whereas many male flight students are utterly clueless but would (and occasionally do) DIE before admitting this or asking for help. Female pilots also tend to outlive male pilots. You will NEVER hear a woman say, “Hey, Bubba, hold my beer and WATCH THIS!”

Females in aviation seem to have a slight confidence problem early in their training. But, with a little extra patience from the flight instructor, they blossom into a superior pilot.

Women make very skilled pilots. But, from my experience, lack the aggressiveness of their male counterparts. The modern aircraft, however, no longer require an aggressive, risk-taking personality. Actually they require a more patient, observing, thoughtful type of individual who works well in a team rather than a “lone-wolf” environment.

Additional Wisdom from one Male Flight Instructor:

#1 Male instructors, just as most men, are NOT mind readers.

#2 Ask for what you want. Let us be clear on this one. Subtle hints do not work. Strong hints do not work. Obvious hints do not work. Just say it directly without being sorry or emotional. It is important I understand so that you can succeed in your flight training and dream to be a pilot. I do want to be part of your success.

#3 Tell me if you are crying because of joy or you are upset. It is often hard to tell the difference. I want to share the joy of flying with you. But, I don't want to scare the hell out of you.

#4 "Yes" and "No" are perfectly acceptable answers to almost every question, especially in flight.

#5 Come to me with a problem only if you want help solving it. That's what males are trained to do. Sympathy and sharing are very hard for me. Hopefully we can find a female pilot mentor to help out here.

#6 Anything we, (especially I) said six weeks ago is inadmissible in an argument. I really don't remember. If I hurt your feelings tell me immediately that you do not appreciate my tone or "whatever" and, if I do it again, you are finding another instructor. In fact, all comments become "Null and Void" after three days because I really won't remember saying "that."

#7 If something I said which could be interpreted two ways and one of the ways makes you sad or angry, I meant the other one

#8 Whenever possible, please say whatever you have to say on the ground. I am not your enemy. I want you to be a pilot, too. We are a team. I care about aviation or I would not be instructing.

#9 Learning the terms, especially on the instrument panel, is important. If I tell you to turn the "red-thingy" to the left, you might turn the incorrect "red-thingy." Yes, flying has its own language. Most important endeavors do. Just think of it as learning another foreign language. And, if you don't understand the new word. Tell me immediately so you can learn it right away.

#10 It is OK to be scared. Male pilots-in-training are, too. They just hide it better. If I ask what is wrong and you say "nothing." I will take you at your word and will act like nothing's wrong.