

Traits of a Good Instructor

- **Uses a written syllabus you both access.**
 - This gives you a structured, efficient training regimen that progresses steadily towards a goal.
 - There are a ton of commercially (or flight school) generated, free syllabi. Just use one.
- **Debriefs every lesson outside the airplane in a comfortable environment**
 - Reviews what you accomplished, weak areas, strong areas, and your achievements against a standard.
 - Allows you to evaluate your own performance (builds your evaluation skills).
 - Is done in a comfortable setting AFTER you've had a few minutes to decompress post-flight.
 - "See you next time" is **NOT** a debrief.
 - Debriefing in the cockpit and/or during taxi in is absolutely inappropriate.
 - Skipping the debrief because the CFI is late for his next lesson is disrespectful to you and wastes a significant portion of **your** lesson.
 - Here's a good starting point for what to expect out of a pre and post-flight brief (Gleim Aviation)
- **Discusses the next lesson and assigns homework every meeting**
 - Ensures you both understand what is coming up.
 - Assigns or discusses the knowledge and practice expected before your next lesson.
 - Encourages you to "chair fly" between lessons with a simulator or cockpit poster (this is free).
- **Starts where you left off without prompting**
 - Your instructor and you know where you are starting and what you're accomplishing when you meet.
 - Never asks "where are we?" or "what do you want to work on?" to start a lesson.
 - Is based on the post-flight discussion from last lesson.
- **Is co-invested in your training progress**
 - Your CFI is supposed to be your champion and wants to see you succeed!
 - Empathetic to your struggles and exuberant over your victories.
- **Evaluates you to standards**
 - You pass your checkride based on standards (Airman Certification Standards (ACS)).
 - Your CFI must get you to those standards before your checkride.
 - If the CFI doesn't discuss these with you as you progress through training, this is a major red flag.
 - Every lesson should have standards (new maneuvers need less stringent standards as a starting point)
 - * Example: "Pretty good" altitude control is not a standard. Maintaining altitude within 200' between two waypoints is a standard until learner can progress to ACS standard.
- **Treats You with Respect**
 - Makes you feel like a worthwhile learner.
 - Never belittles or degrades you for substandard performance.
 - Doesn't direct his/her frustration towards you.
 - *HOWEVER*, holds you to a standard (like coming to a lesson with the agreed upon homework done)
- **Respects Your Time and Money**
 - Is on time and ready to go immediately upon meeting you each lesson.
 - Wastes no time in progressing through the lesson.
 - Doesn't dawdle with the airplane running (pad his/her own hours at your expense).

Traits of a Bad Instructor

- **“Winging” your training** (Does not use a syllabus)
 - Lessons don’t “flow” in a logical manner.
 - Repeat lessons or material for no logical reason.
- **Texting or Calling**
 - Texts or calls during your lesson –in air or on the ground.
 - Demonstrates you are not the priority (but expects you to pay him or her like you are).
 - WAY TOO COMMON – every instructor I’ve had over last three years has done this.
- **Showing Up Late**
 - Doesn’t inform you of delays or problems.
 - Habitually has problems with on-time performance.
 - Doesn’t compensate you for delays and time mismanagement.
- **Charging for time not instructing**
 - Charges you for the scheduled lesson time even though CFI showed up late or ended lesson early.
 - Charges you for time while you’re preflighting but your CFI is in the school house.
 - Any behavior where you are paying and your CFI is not actively with you and instructing.
- **Dawdling with the aircraft engine running** (padding their time on your dollar)
 - Significantly delays your engine-start, taxi or runup for unexplained reasons.
 - Is flying the aircraft a lot when you should be on the controls.
 - If something feels off, talk to someone you trust about the behavior.
- **Debriefing the lesson during a taxi in**
 - The taxi demands total focus outside the aircraft.
 - Your CFI preaches this, but then gives you a debrief or chats during the taxi.
 - Your body & mind are not receptive to a debrief until later.
 - Almost every CFI I’ve had does this – don’t accept it.
- **Rushing to the Next Lesson**
 - Your CFI should schedule logically to allow briefs and debriefs for each lesson.
 - If your CFI is rushing you out so he/she can get to the next lesson, this is unacceptable.
 - This is often the reason for the “taxi debrief” discussed in last section.
- **Yelling or belittling you; expressing their frustration with you for honest effort**
 - You are the paying customer developing a challenging skill and knowledge set.
 - CFIs that get frustrated with or at you for honest effort are not for you.
 - CFIs think skills are “easy” only because they have hundreds of hours practicing them.
- **Arrives to the lesson and doesn’t recall where you are in your training**
 - CFI is unprepared for your lesson.
 - CFI doesn’t value your training when he/she does this.
 - Your instructor should have notes and a syllabus/progress tracker of each student.
- **“Burned Out” building hours and unenthusiastic about you and your progress**
 - This is notorious behavior for experienced “time-building” CFIs.
 - If your CFI doesn’t have the right attitude towards flying and you, fire him (her).