



LeRoy Cook

BEYOND FLIGHT TRAINING

FOURTH EDITION

Adventures and opportunities for the newly certificated pilot



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Beyond Flight Training
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DEDICATION

To Dennis Shattuck, whose unfailing tolerance and support as my editor meant so much throughout our association.

B | O

A lifelong student of aviation, LeRoy Cook is an experienced pilot and instructor who's been flying and teaching since the early 1960s. He holds ATP certification for single and multi-engine airplanes and commercial certification for gliders and seaplanes. His Gold Seal flight instructor's certificate has ratings for single-engine and multi-engine airplanes, instrument (airplane), and glider. Cook is the author of over 1,700 magazine articles and has written or co-authored four aviation books. He wrote the "CFI" column in *Private Pilot* magazine for 34 years and was the editor of *Twin & Turbine* magazine from 2012 to 2016.

INTRODUCTION

This book is for young pilots—young in hours of flying experience, if not in age. When a new pilot finishes the course of training leading to the private pilot certificate, he or she often enters a letdown phase, during which it is natural to wonder, “What do I do now?” No longer carefully shepherded through each hour, the pilot is suddenly left to seek his or her destiny unaided.

This book will attempt to pick up where student training leaves off, taking the new pilot into areas only lightly touched in training—or perhaps omitted altogether. We will explore those first trips, enter unfamiliar airports, negotiate for ATC services and learn more about weather. We’ll talk about each of the flying seasons, from breezy spring to hazy summer, and on into foggy autumn and frigid winter.

Most importantly, we’re going to discuss the pilot’s need for understanding his or her limitations by developing the judgment and careful attitude that will prevent a bad experience from turning into a tragedy. When and how to buy and fly that first airplane will be covered, and we’ll also talk about going on, taking advanced training for skills and licenses to be added to those of the basic private pilot certificate.

Learning to fly should continue throughout a pilot’s career, an unending process more properly termed “learning about flying.” When a beginning student asks me, “How long will it take to learn to fly?” I always employ my favorite rejoinder: “I don’t know—I’ve never finished.”

Each flight is a chance to learn more, and with all the wide and varied experiences available to the modern aviator, there should be no reason to grow stale.

Come explore with us.

LeRoy Cook



PART ONE

STRIKING
OUT ON
YOUR OWN

CHAPTER 1

A LICENSE TO LEARN

It's a good feeling to have the private pilot checkride passed, to have all that dual and solo practice behind you. Now you're free to go out and just fly when and where you want, and with anybody you can talk into going along. Welcome, new pilot, to the real world of aviation.

Do you know what you've just acquired? A license to learn, that's what. Let's face it, you aren't a bit safer or smarter than you were before you passed your checkride, yet previously you couldn't have taken me for a ride, and now you can. The difference between then and now is that little slip of paper that says "Private Pilot" on it, soon to be replaced with a permanent plastic card. You've been tested and found free of unsafe gaps in skill and knowledge. You've got gaps all right; it's just that the government feels they are inconsequential enough to be filled in while you engage in your own personal flying.

Never, ever, stop learning about flying if you want to be around to give your grandchildren airplane rides and to eventually pass away of natural causes. There is so much to know I rather doubt that anyone can lay claim to all of it, yet you will look back on this moment years from



A new private pilot proudly shows off his temporary certificate and receives congratulations from his flight instructor.

now and truly realize how little you knew when you became a private pilot. You've been given all the training the average student can afford; the rest just has to come later.

THE FIRST PASSENGERS

You've probably got a long list of people you have been promising to take for a ride, so call them up as the opportunity arises and share your joy. But, please, do aviation a favor and pick a good, quiet, still-air hour for their ride if they haven't been up before. Treat them gently; explain what you're doing so they won't jump and clutch when the wings bank and the sound of the engine changes. Keep the turns gentle and the climbs and descents shallow; don't try to prove your prowess as a fighter pilot.

Some people may seem reluctant to ride with you, a little afraid for their necks, perhaps, because they're being flown by a newly rated pilot. If they would only read the accident statistics, they would find that you're a safer bet now than you will be a couple of hundred hours down the road. Right now, you're still cautious and unsure of yourself. You'll ask for advice, you'll use your checklist, you'll preflight carefully. Sadly, all this tends to change when your logbook reaches the vicinity of the 200-hour mark. With that amount of flying time, you're no longer a green hand; you're feeling like an old, experienced pilot. You don't need those student pilot crutches any more; you figure you've been around and seen it all. Most 200-hour pilots make it through this settling period, but some don't. The accident charts show a similar trend around the magic 1,000-hour mark. "This is a lot of flying time," you'll think, "Surely I know it all by now." Take it from me—you don't. I'm still learning just as much today as when I passed that thousandth hour.

NEVER STOP GETTING BETTER

Now, where you go from here is up to you. You can fly the next 500 hours and gain 500 hours of experience, or you can log 500 hours and get one hour's experience repeated 500 times. Take your choice: either learn from each hour and get better, or sit there insensitive and regress. Right now, you're probably thinking, "Heck, I'll bet some of the private pilots I know couldn't pass that flight test." You're right—they stopped learning the day they passed their checkride. They have never gone on to master 30-knot winds or high-density traffic; they're right there where they were as student pilots. Resolve not to let this happen to you.

You told your instructor you would be back every little bit for some refresher training. Did you notice his or her half-smile? They've heard every pilot that's graduated make that statement, and it almost never happens. Please, surprise them by coming back. As you will find out in the coming years, a short biennial flight review does not constitute adequate refresher training. In keeping with your desire to learn all you can, get curious about something once in a while; watch an online video and take an hour of dual to see what it's all about. Maybe you want to see inside a cloud, for real; get a certified instrument flight instructor (CFI-I) and try it—the right way. Maybe you want to see the world roll around the airplane; if so, take a sample aerobatic lesson. We all need a CFI to ride with us now and then, so find some excuse to make it interesting and you'll be more likely to do it.

Convinced that you want to get sharp? Good, just keep your eyes and ears open and fly—that's the way to begin. Now that you're a real pilot, take a short weekend cross-country trip or two. Just avoid a rigid schedule, so the weather can't trap you, and have more than one destination in mind, so you can outflank a front. Get out there and see how it really is. If you stay in the local area, hopping friends on a Sunday afternoon, you'll gradually lose your confidence and desire. Besides, someday you'll want to see another seacoast or the other side of the mountains, and you need to warm up first by making small trips before tackling a week-long journey.

BATTLING THE BUDGET

Can't afford it, you say? Surprise: none of us can. Most of us do without something else to support a flying habit—things like lunch, golf, or a new car. If you can't fly as much as you want to—and who can—at least hang around the airport and keep your antenna up, receiving the vibrations of aeronautical life. It'll keep you out of the bars, anyway, and that'll save money for flying later. Read all those flying magazines so you can benefit from the experiences of the other guys and gals; it'll all be helpful someday.

Thinking about buying an airplane? This is not the time. If you have the money available, somebody may sell you something you don't really need. You should first rent the various types you're interested in, if possible, or maybe offer to pay expenses for an extended demonstration. Don't buy something because it's pretty, or after only one hop around the patch. Take it out and fly it cross-country for an hour or two;

that short jaunt may save you much more than it'll ever cost you. Go to a trusted fixed-base operator (FBO), CFI, or A&P mechanic and ask what he or she thinks; pay for the opinion if necessary, but don't buy an airplane in haste.

On the other hand, you might as well give up and buy something that isn't exactly perfect as soon as you can make up your mind, just so you can maintain proficiency at your convenience. If you can make a good rental deal on a little-used airplane, fine and dandy, but after you are forced to cancel a few trips and drive 200 miles in bright sunshine because the airplane was busy, you'll probably be an airplane sales prospect.

You might think weather is the great bugaboo of this business, and you'd be right. It turns up in the accident reports all too often, more than any other single factor, and it behooves you to hone and sharpen your weather sense. Whether you're flying or not, get in the habit of looking up at the sky every day and analyzing what you see there. Know what various types of clouds mean, which way good weather lies, and when a forecast isn't reliable. You must learn to be your own weather-person; don't abdicate this responsibility to others.

As time goes on, you will someday be looked upon as an old, knowledgeable pilot. Use the coming years and hours wisely so that this assessment will not be a mistaken one.



CHAPTER 2

GOING SOMEWHERE?

When you suddenly have a trip laid on to a place you've never heard of, getting organized to leap off in a hurry takes a bit of doing. Spreading out a chart and searching for an obscure destination leads only to fruitless frustration, and, likely as not, asking other pilots for a clue will provide the standard response, "Never heard of it." Fortunately, there



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Earning the Private Pilot license is a great achievement—now, expand your initial schooling to go Beyond Flight Training.

The real excitement begins when the flight instructor lets go of your hand and you're left to set your own goals and create your own motivations.

Veteran pilot and instructor LeRoy Cook shows you what lies beyond flight school. In these pages, he'll guide you into areas of aviation your instructors might not have mentioned. Things like planning your first cross-country flying vacation...or sharpening your weather forecasting skills...or pursuing advanced endorsements and ratings.

Beyond Flight Training will show you how to:

- Grow as a pilot, beyond the checkride
- Purchase your first airplane
- Test-hop a new or rebuilt plane
- Organize or join a flying club
- Handle unfamiliar airports and airspace, not seen in training
- Take care of family and first-time passengers
- Cope with the changing seasons and marginal weather
- Upgrade to specialized flying, like high-performance, complex, tailwheel and aerobatic aircraft
- Prepare for advanced pilot certifications

In print for more than 30 years, this 4th Edition of *Beyond Flight Training* (previously published as *101 Things To Do With Your Private License*) is packed with new ways to sharpen your skills and make every flying hour rewarding.

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