

Flying Instructor interview questions

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What to expect

Flying instructor interviews vary by employer, but the pattern is fairly consistent: a conversation about your ratings and recency, a probe into how you teach, and at least one scenario that checks whether you can make a safe call in the air or on the ground. Flying schools, aero clubs and charter operators also want to know you can keep records straight, because their approval to train depends on it.

- **Technical and regulatory:** Questions on aerodynamics, airspace, weather, aircraft systems and the Part 61 requirements that govern what you can endorse a student for.
- **Instructional method:** How you brief, demonstrate, hand over control and debrief, and how you adapt when a student is not getting it.
- **Judgement and scenario:** Situations in the air or on the ground where the safe answer is not the convenient one, usually testing solo supervision, weather and go or no-go calls.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of holding a student back, managing a difficult student or dealing with an incident.
- **Safety and compliance:** Record keeping, defect reporting, documentation audits and your understanding of what CASA expects of a training organisation.
- **Client-facing:** Handling trial flight customers, anxious students and people who have paid for a lesson and expect a result.

Most interviews run in two stages. The first is a conversation with the chief flying instructor or operations manager covering your licence, ratings, recency, medical and hours, followed by questions on teaching approach and scenarios drawn from the school's own operation. The second is often a flight or simulator assessment where you teach a nominated manoeuvre to an instructor playing the student. Smaller schools may compress this into a single visit with the flight check at the end. Expect the scenario questions to be the ones that decide the outcome.

1. Walk me through how you would brief and demonstrate a forced landing to a student who has never seen one.

Why they ask

This is the core instructional skill. The interviewer is checking whether you can structure a lesson, choose what to leave out, and hand over control at the right moment.

How to structure your answer

A lesson walk-through: state your objective, outline the ground brief, describe the demonstration, explain the handover, then finish with how you debrief.

Example answer

"I start on the ground with the decisions rather than the manoeuvre. We talk about where the glide cone puts us at different altitudes, how to pick a field that gives an into-wind landing and a way out, and what radio call we make. Then I write the sequence on the whiteboard: maintain attitude and best glide speed, pick the field, run the cause check, brief the passenger, attempt a restart if the type allows, commit to the field. In the air I demonstrate once, talking through each step, then hand it over and stay quiet unless something unsafe is about to happen. The debrief afterwards focuses on the decisions they made, not the smoothness of the handling, because that is what will matter if it ever happens for real."

2. Tell me about a time you decided a student was not ready to go solo.

Why they ask

Every instructor eventually has to make an unpopular call. The interviewer wants evidence you can hold a standard under pressure from the student and the schedule.

How to structure your answer

STAR: the situation, what you had to decide, what you actually did and how you communicated it, then the outcome.

Example answer

"I had a student who was flying accurate circuits and had done everything on the syllabus, but rushed the pre-landing checks every time, especially when another aircraft was on final behind them. The school had them pencilled in for solo that week and they were expecting it. I sat down with them, went through the last three lesson records, and explained that the handling was fine but I needed to see the checks happen at the same point every circuit under pressure. We did two more dual sessions with me calling traffic on the radio to create that pressure deliberately. They went solo a week later and were solid, and afterwards they told me they understood why I had waited, which matters more to me than the schedule did."

3. A student is on their first solo and the weather is starting to come in. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is the judgement test. The interviewer wants to hear priorities in the right order and see that you act early rather than hope the forecast holds.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: gather the facts quickly, name your priorities, decide and act, communicate, then review afterwards.

Example answer

"First I get facts rather than impressions. I check the actual conditions and the trend, and I look at what the student can handle, because a first solo student in the circuit does not have the capacity to deal with much. My priorities are the student, then the aircraft, then the schedule, and nothing about the schedule changes the first two. If the trend is going the wrong way I bring them in early rather than waiting for the ceiling to reach the limit. I keep radio contact the whole time, keep my instructions short and calm, and make it a normal circuit rather than an emergency. Once they are on the ground we debrief it properly, because a first solo that ends early is still a good lesson if it is handled well."

4. How do you decide a student is ready for their first solo?

Why they ask

The school is lending you its aircraft and its certificate. This question checks whether your standard is consistent and defensible.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: list the criteria you apply, then show how you confirm them and who else is involved.

Example answer

"There are three things I want in place. The handling has to be consistent rather than occasionally good, so I want to see a run of circuits where the approach and landing are stable without me touching anything. The decision making has to be there, which means they are making the radio calls and tracking traffic without prompting. And their knowledge has to hold up, so I ask them to talk me through the aircraft, the weather limits and what they would do if something went wrong on downwind. If all three are there I do a final dual check, then brief them on exactly what the solo will involve and what I want them to do if anything is not right. Depending on the school, the chief flying instructor signs off as well, and I am comfortable with that second set of eyes."

5. A student keeps flaring too early on landing and is getting frustrated. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Teaching adults who are paying for a result is a real part of the job. The interviewer is checking that you can diagnose rather than just repeat the same lesson louder.

How to structure your answer

A coaching approach: diagnose the cause, change the method rather than the message, check understanding, then close the loop with the student.

Example answer

"Repeating the same lesson is not going to help, so first I work out what is actually driving it. Often it is a sight picture problem rather than a control problem, so I change the reference they are using. I might take them to a different runway or a different seat position, or get them to fly the last part of the approach by looking at the threshold rather than the nose. If that does not shift it I will demonstrate with them following on the controls, then hand back one stage at a time. I also make a point of naming the things that are going well in the same lesson, because a frustrated student stops learning. We finish with them telling me what they are going to do differently next time, and I write that down so the next lesson starts there."

6. How do you keep your training records in a state that would survive a CASA audit?

Why they ask

A training organisation's approval depends on documentation. The interviewer needs confidence that you treat the paperwork as part of the job, not an afterthought.

How to structure your answer

A compliance explanation: describe your system, how you keep it current, and how you would handle a gap or a correction.

Example answer

"I write the record in the same session the flight happened, while it is fresh, rather than saving it for the end of the week. Each entry covers what we briefed, what was demonstrated, what the student actually did, what standard they reached and what the next lesson is. I use the training management system so the sequence is visible and nothing gets skipped, and I keep the aircraft documentation and defect reports current on the same day. If I find something missing or wrong later, I correct it properly with a dated note rather than quietly editing it, because a clean correction trail is what an auditor wants to see. I would rather spend twenty minutes at the end of a flying day than have a student's file fail an inspection six months later."