

What to expect.

There's two types of pilots license you can get. The sport pilot and the private pilot. There's a few differences in the trainings and the rules between the two license. The sport pilot license is a sort of restricted private pilot license designed to make it cheaper to obtain your license. The benefits of the sport pilot license are that it requires less training making the instruction cheaper, and you are not required to get a class 3 medical. You must however have a valid drivers license to fly as a sport pilot. So how is the sport pilot license restricted in regards to the private pilot license? Well the main restrictions are that you may only fly during the day, may only carry one passenger and the aircraft may not have more than 2 seats. There are also rules limiting the aircrafts total gross weight and top speed at max continuous power at sea level. Because of the weight, seat and speed restrictions it puts a pretty good cap on the number of aircraft available to fly.

The private pilot license does not have the seat, speed, weight or night restrictions of the sport pilot. The private pilot requires a minimum of 40 hours of flight time to get your license, while the sport pilot requires only 25 hours. Both sport and private licenses will encompass ground instruction, written knowledge test and a check ride with an examiner. The private pilot license will require more cross country flight training, night flight training and training regarding flight in more complex airspace.

Regardless of which license you decide to pursue, the training will start out in a very similar manner and is nearly identical up until after you've soloed. So what does the training up to this point entail? Well first you will start off learning about the basic controls of the aircraft and simple principles of flight. Next you will learn how to preflight the aircraft to ensure it is safe and ready to fly. After the preflight you will move inside the cockpit and begin to learn the instruments and controls and what they all do, followed by engine starting/shutdown procedures. While the engine is up and running you will likely taxi the aircraft around to get used to it's ground handling characteristics. From this point on the majority of your lessons will be spent in the air learning to fly. First you will learn to take-off, followed by some simple turning maneuvers and learning the general controls and getting comfortable with the aircraft. The maneuvers you will start off with will likely be shallow to medium bank turns, climbs, descents and tracking paths along the ground. The next series of maneuvers will include power on and power off stalls, steep bank turns, S-turns and turns around a point. The last major hurdle left until your solo is learning to land the aircraft. This is usually the most difficult part to master, so when most students reach this point it can take a while to get it down, but once you're consistently landing the aircraft the instructor will turn you loose to try a few on your own - your first solo!

The solo period consists of 3 take offs and landings, at which time the instructor is monitoring your performance. After three days of these supervised solos your instructor will sign your solo endorsement allowing you to fly by yourself within a reasonable distance of the airport. This time is to be spent practicing maneuvers and improving your flying skills.

At this point the training will shift to navigation and cross-country flights to get you from one place to another, and if you haven't been flying in at air traffic controlled airport you will be making some trips to a tower controlled airport to learn those procedures. If you're going for your sport pilot license your training is just about done now! If you're getting a private pilot license you will also continue on with night flight training and a night cross country flight. Once all of your instruction, cross country and total flight time requirements are met you're ready for the check ride to join the ranks as a pilot!