

How to save money on flight training

Learning to fly is a big investment; the average student will spend around \$21,000 to get their Private Pilot's Licence. Many schools will quote minimum times (45 hours) to lure students in with a \$10,000 approximate cost, when a more realistic average is 65 hours (about 45 dual, 20 solo).

So how do you, the student, get closer to that 45 hour minimum?

1. Keep on top of your flying schedule

Hands and Feet flying skills, and ground knowledge fade quickly. Transport Canada's research shows students will remember about 70% of what they've learned after two days, and only about 50% a week later.

A student who has been away from flying for a few weeks will require more review as memory of procedures fade. The costs incurred re-visiting previous exercises will add up and increase the overall cost of the program. In aviation, proficiency is maintained through recency in flying. Keeping flights closer together will help you advance more quickly with less invested into review, and more into advancing your skills.

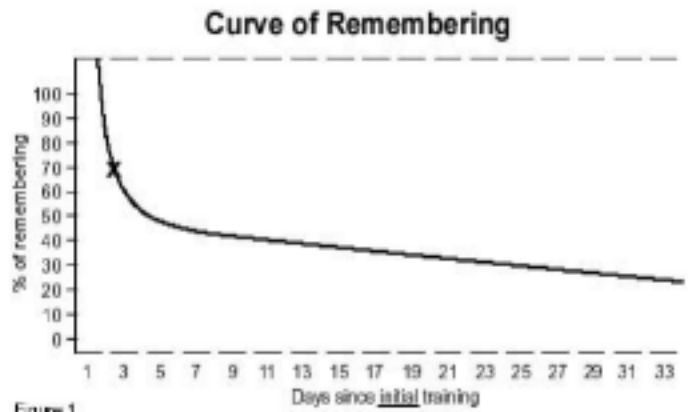


Figure 1

Frequency	Timeframe	Hours est.	Cost est.
4/week	4 months	55 hours	\$17,000
2/week	9 months	65 hours	\$20,000
1/week	16 months	75 hours	\$24,000
1/month	5 years	100 hours	\$37,000

We all have personal lives – family, work and other commitments and priorities can limit your availability to fly. Your instructor knows this and will work with you to create a flying schedule that suits your needs. Ideally, a flying frequency of twice a week or more will take best advantage of the curve of remembering above, however based on circumstances you may need to stretch out your training over a longer timeline. The licence is achievable even by the busiest lifestyle, it may just require an increased overall investment. The table to the left provides a rough outline of cost vs. frequency of flying.

A helpful attitude to have during your training is: **cancelled flights do not mean cancelled learning!** Weather can be a challenge, especially in the winter months, but there are many topics that can be studied at home or covered with your instructor in the briefing room or simulator to retain and expand your knowledge. Don't forget to plan for some weather cancellations in your flying schedule, the table above is based on flights *flown*, not flights *booked*.

2. Come Prepared

At the end of each lesson, make sure you have a clear picture of what's coming up next. Between each flight it is expected that you study what you've learned and what is coming. Your instructor's guidance and this program outline can help you keep track of the overall training picture.

The **Flight Training Manual** outlines the syllabus for the pilot's licence and is the guide to your training, there is a wealth of essential information within. Your instructor will direct you to various resources to study before and after each flight as well.

Before each flight you will meet with your instructor for ground instruction where you will learn critical flight information based on the reading. If you come prepared having read the required material, the briefings will be shorter, more engaging, and more cost effective.



3. Ask Questions

As with above, if you're not sure about something in the material, ask! Asking questions on the ground is a lot less expensive than asking them in the airplane. That's not to say don't ask questions in the airplane, but rather have as many of your inquiries addressed as possible, prior to departure. That is the purpose of the Pre-Flight Instruction.

After your flight, your instructor will provide feedback on the flight and will give direction for what's coming next. If you are unsure about the next steps don't be afraid to ask! Take that opportunity to ask about things you're having trouble with, ask what else you can study/work on (there's a lot to know!).

4. Make use of training aids

Did you just start training? Grab a copy of the aircraft checklist, open up a picture of the airplane cockpit, and couch-fly. Couch-flying is art of practicing procedures and actions while visualizing the real airplane, but for the low-low price of free! It takes the average student about 10 flights before they will know where all the main instruments and controls are in the aircraft by memory, the faster you learn these items the better!

Another effective training aid is the flight simulator. Some exercises can be taught in the simulator as good as, or better than the airplane! The cost of the simulator is considerably less expensive than an airplane, and can be done in any weather!



5. Forget the misconceptions

One of the most pervasive misconceptions we see about Flight Training is that you *should* or even *must* complete Ground School before flying! We're not sure where this one comes from, but we're pretty sure it's the movies. This couldn't be further from the truth! In fact, Transport Canada doesn't want you to do this! A prerequisite for writing the final written examination is to have completed *at least* 10 hours of in-flight training!

Having flight experience is an essential aid in your progression through the Ground School course, being able to relate abstract concepts to actual flight experiences will help you grasp the content of the course. If you are in Ground School and not flying, it's significantly more difficult because there's nothing to relate it to. Ground School is a lot to take in, and you should reward yourself with fun flying experiences to help retain everything. We often see students that are not flying get discouraged or overwhelmed by the groundschool content. In some cases even though they are very capable of becoming pilots, they elect to not continue with training. Over decades of teaching flying, we have seen a much higher success rate from Ground School students who are actively flying!

Speaking on Ground School, another misconception is that it must be done in-class. This is also not true. There are online and self-paced study options. Talk to your instructor on how this can work, and the pros and cons of each option.

Another common misconception is that buying your own aircraft makes it *cheaper* to get your licence. This can be true in some circumstances, but there are a lot of variables to consider. Generally speaking, flying your own aircraft only makes financial sense if you plan to fly a lot, say 70-100 hours per year. There are costs with Insurance, Storage and Maintenance both scheduled and non that can make or break this investment. There are many good reasons to own your own airplane, but cost isn't typically the benefit we hear from aircraft owners that love owning their own airplane. Contrary to what many think, you don't have to buy an airplane after getting licenced either - most private pilots will rent an aircraft from any flight school or club operating at many airports throughout the country.

Many people hear bad info on how to stay current after getting their licence. Transport Canada has a document called "Take Five for Safety - How to stay current" (included in unit 6 in this program) - this outlines the requirements to keep your Licence **active**, but it never expires! Cost to stay current varies based on a number of factors, but typically \$100-\$150 per month after getting licenced, most golf memberships are at least twice this much. There are many cases too where if you're doing this currency flying anyway, your passengers can chip in for a portion of the costs to make flying very economical. Think you and three friends landing at Toronto Island for \$75 each!