**LEARNING TO FLY (WITH CSFC?)**

Gaining a pilot’s licence is challenging and rewarding - but not the cheapest of hobbies! You need to think carefully before embarking on the course and here are some of the points to consider.

Of course a more fun way of understanding this sort of information is having an introductory flight with us or our colleagues in Skytrek. Have a look on Skytrek’s website [www.skytrekair.com](http://www.skytrekair.com) for details of their “trial lessons” (an actual flying lesson) or “flight experience” (more of a “jolly”). There’s no need to join us/CSFC (or Skytrek) beforehand BUT we strongly advise you to make contact with us in CSFC first, so we can understand your situation and recommend what we think will be best in your circumstances.

The type of aircraft we fly in CSFC is classed as a “single engine piston”, or SEP. There are other types such as gliders, micro-lights and auto-gyros (but none of them via CSFC). There are private pilot licences (PPL) or light aircraft pilot licences (LAPL). Both PPL and LAPL cover our CSFC aircraft. A LAPL is a more restricted licence than the PPL. For example, a LAPL is only recognised in the UK and Europe so renting and piloting a plane whilst travelling elsewhere in the world will not be possible. Also, you can extend your PPL to cover flying in more complex ways e.g. on instruments (but not with a LAPL). However, a LAPL may be perfectly adequate for your ambitions and it takes a minimum of 30 hours tuition instead of 45 for a PPL, so will cost less in money and time.

Most people take more than the minimum hours to gain their licence. We are at Rochester airport in Kent so you need to think about making 30+ (for LAPL) or 45+ (PPL) journeys to/from Rochester. An airport’s opening times and whether there are hard or grass runways can be important factors. Rochester’s operating hours are 08.30 to 17.30, including weekends. It has one grass runway which in winter can become too wet to be safely usable.

Most training is conducted in simple and light-weight 2-seat aircraft (rather than 4-seat “tourers”). At Rochester these trainers are Cessna 152s. Our CSFC aircraft is a heavier, 4-seat, well equipped Cessna 172 “tourer” and even at our good value rates, may cost more to fly than a basic C-152. Larger/heavier individuals however may find the C-152 rather too small and cramped to be comfortable, so will prefer a C-172. On the other hand, our C-172 has more comprehensive avionics (navigation and radio) than a simple C-152 and may appear more complicated. Once people have their PPL or LAPL, transitioning from a C-152 to a C-172 is relatively straightforward. But if you learn in our C-172 you are ready to fly it immediately you have gained your PPL or LAPL.

We in CSFC are not authorised to conduct training. Instead we are partnered with Skytrek Flying School and use their instructors plus facilities. If you learn via CSFC you would fly our only aircraft (C-172 registration G-WACW) and be invoiced by us for the flying, but pay Skytrek for the instruction and administration of your training. If our aircraft wasn’t available you could have a lesson on a Skytrek aircraft but it wouldn’t be exactly the same type, or have the same kit, so may not be as effective from a learning perspective.

The choice and number of aircraft on the training provider’s fleet may be a factor. Aircraft need to be out of service from time to time for routine maintenance. As our CSFC aircraft is a “tourer” it will often be booked for PPL flights. On the other hand learning with Skytrek on their C-152s means good availability of the same aircraft type and with similar basic radio/navigation equipment.

If you go for an SEP PPL or LAPL at Rochester, you need to be a member of Skytrek (£150 annually), whether you learn directly with them or via us in CSFC.

Pilots log time from the moment the brakes are released and they start to taxy until they re-apply the brakes at the end of the sortie. Flying schools should quote their prices as “brakes off/on” but many also use engine-based instruments for their charging. When the rev counter or tachometer is used, one clock hour brakes off/on will typically equate to around 0.8 – 0.85 of an “engine hour” or “tacho hour”. When comparing flight school prices be sure to understand the basis of charging. Check also what extras may, or may not, be included. At Rochester for example there are no landing fees (for home-based aircraft like ours and the Skytrek fleet) but elsewhere a fee of several pounds may be levied for every “touch and go” (practice land and take-off). You will fly loads of touch and goes during training – and throughout your flying.

Pricing is covered in our web site prices section.

Although we offer great value, you need to think through the factors above and any others you come up with before deciding where to learn. Then, if learning with CSFC is your conclusion, please contact us and we will have you airborne in no time!