



Flight After a Period of Inactivity

Returning to flight operations after a period of inactivity has resulted in loss of control accidents. But with a solid plan and determination, you can get back to enjoying the freedom only flying can offer. Begin by exploring why you stopped flying – the most common are time, money, and medical issues. Depending on how long it's been since you've flown, you may be unaware of some changes that could make the prospect of returning to flight less overwhelming than you think. Here are some scenarios that may apply to your situation.

Medical Policy Makeovers

The first step for many returning pilots is an assessment of personal health and fitness. What may have been disqualifying years earlier may now be acceptable with revised waiver and special-issuance guidelines. For a complete list of conditions that are no longer automatic disqualifiers, see the Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) Guide online at <http://1.usa.gov/187odaU>.

Lighten Your Load

A big change that opens the doors for more pilots to regain the freedom and fun of personal flying is the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft rule, implemented in 2004. Pilots may operate aircraft that fall within certain reduced weight and speed parameters, and are required only to have a valid U.S. driver's license to validate medical fitness.

These light aircraft save on gas and rent for less than a standard single-engine trainer. If you already have a private-pilot certificate, you can legally fly a light sport aircraft provided you are current, and it is the same category you're checked out in.

Fill the Right Seat with the Right Person

Don't overlook the guidance of a good instructor. Find someone who understands your situation and is willing to take extra time to help you get back in your game. Be clear about your intentions and work together to set attainable training goals. Don't be afraid to ask questions or request a review of any segments of flying you feel out of touch with, like stalls or steep turns.

Relearn Your ABCs

An important task for anyone returning to flight is getting up to speed on regulatory changes, especially those pertaining to airspace use. To avoid a visit from a fighter jet squadron, be sure to study up on Special Flight Rules Areas (SFRA), Flight Restricted Zones (FRZ), and Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR).

TFRs can pop up unexpectedly, so before any flight, be sure to research NOTAMs, check the TFR list online at <http://tfr.faa.gov>, and call the Flight Service Station for updates at 1-800-992-7433.

See the March/April 2014 issue of *FAA Safety Briefing* to learn more.

