



Flight After a Period of Inactivity

Returning to flight operations after a period of inactivity can lead to loss of control accidents. But with a solid plan and determination, you can safely get back to enjoying the freedom only flying can offer.

Begin by exploring why you stopped flying – the most common reasons 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 and Conditions AMEs Can Issue (CACI), see the Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) Guide online at <http://1.usa.gov/187odaU>.

There is also the newly announced “BasicMed” rule (www.faa.gov/go/basicmed) that allows GA pilots to fly without holding an FAA medical certificate, as long as they meet certain requirements. Until this rule, the FAA has required private, recreational, and student pilots, as well as flight instructors, to meet the requirements of and hold a third class medical certificate. Pilots may take advantage of the regulatory relief in the BasicMed rule or opt to continue to use their FAA medical certificate. Under BasicMed, a pilot will be required to complete a medical education course, undergo a

medical examination every four years, and comply with aircraft and operating restrictions. For example, pilots using BasicMed cannot operate an aircraft with more than six people onboard, and the aircraft must not weigh more than 6,000 pounds.

Lighten Your Load

Another 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 may rent for less than a standard single-engine trainer. If you already have a private-pilot certificate, you can legally fly a



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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.

When it's time to start flying, don't be too hard on yourself if you seem a bit out of form. A few bumps can be hard to swallow, but that's to be expected when such a highly coordinated skill is put on hold for a while. The key: Remain patient and keep at it.

A good exercise to help get you primed before you even flick the master and turn the key is to spend some extra time with your pre-flight check. Follow your aircraft's checklist carefully. Spend some time in the left seat reviewing instrument and comm/nav switch locations, especially since some pilots might be in for quite a surprise once they climb in the cockpit.

This is because steadily replacing the classic "six pack" of basic instruments are shiny new glass-panel displays that host a suite of new features made possible by the advent of GPS technology. If this is completely unfamiliar to you, consider getting your "air" legs before tackling a Garmin 1000. Better yet, make unlocking the benefits of GPS a fun incentive for you to continue with your flying.

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 Flight Services for updates at 1-800-992-7433.

Flight Review and Done?

It's been said that a pilot certificate is a license to learn, and whether you're an active pilot or one on hiatus, this couldn't be more accurate. Much like a checkride for a new rating, a flight review shouldn't mark the end of your learning process.

Staying proficient on the ground is important, too. This is where FAA's WINGS Pilot Proficiency Program can help. Designed to help encourage a commitment to safety education, the program currently enrolls more than 143,000 airmen who earn credits by completing online courses and attending safety seminars. Those who complete a basic phase of WINGS will get credit for the flight review requirements covered in 14 CFR part 61. Go to www.FAASafety.gov for more.

Resources

- ◆ "Getting Back in the Game," *FAA Safety Briefing*, March/April 2014, page 9
www.faa.gov/news/safety_briefing/2014/media/MarApr2014.pdf
- ◆ BasicMed Information
www.faa.gov/go/BasicMed

