

Strawberry Patch R/C Pilots Training Program

Held on Thursday Evenings 5:30-dusk, from June-September

Current Instructors: Phil Thain, Tyler McCormack

Our fixed wing Training Program aims to teach new pilots about all things RC aviation. This includes SAFETY, ground control, repairs, setup, equipment/battery care, preflights, and flying of course! We want our students to know the ins and outs of their aircraft just as much as we want them to succeed at flying. With this, students will get as much knowledge out of this awesome hobby as they can! The possibilities are endless.

We use the buddy box system to train students. We structure our program in stages, or levels of completion:

Stage 1: *Student*

- New R/C Pilots
- Inexperienced R/C Pilots who can fly with self leveling gyro technology (i.e. SAFE technology) but struggle without it

A student pilot must be fully confident in all phases of flight WITHOUT the use of self leveling gyros (i.e. SAFE) before moving onto the “Solo” stage. Student pilots MUST be flown on a buddy box until the instructor deems him or her ready to advance. This is typically the longest stage of the journey as the pilot will be learning and developing all basic flying and ground school skills.

Stage 2: *Solo*

- Student pilot that is able to fly confidently without a buddy box or SAFE technology

Solo pilots are students who were deemed safe enough by their instructor to remove the cord and fly confidently by themselves. Solo pilots MUST be under the supervision of a willing “Proficient” member whenever flying, as they are still technically students. This is usually the shortest stage of our program (depending on the student) as it allows the student a brief period of showing confidence without any training aids before completing the training program. While in the solo stage, a pilot is free to use SAFE technology during flights. Although to eventually progress to “proficient,” they must demonstrate the ability to fly confidently without it during that test flight.

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Stage 3: Proficient

- Pilot that has completed the training program and can fly anytime without supervision

Once the instructor is comfortable with the Solo student's progress, they will conduct a proficiency test (explained later) so that the student can demonstrate their full understanding of not only flying, but ground safety as well, to their instructor/club. Once the student passes, they will gain their wings and become a proficient pilot. A proficient pilot is allowed to fly at the field at any time during flying hours without supervision if over 18 years of age. Any pilot under 18 must be under adult supervision.

Stage 4 (optional): Instructor

An instructor can train student pilots with a buddy box. Any proficient pilot is allowed to take the Instructor's Exam (explained later) to show that he or she is capable of safely training new students with the buddy box system, and can skillfully maneuver through any emergency that may arrive.

Progressing Through the Stages

Student to Solo:

When an instructor feels fully confident about a student pilot's ability to maintain full control over the aircraft in all phases of flight without SAFE technology, they can then conduct the Solo Certification Flight.

This flight, guided by the instructor, includes at minimum: pre-flight safety checks, proper handling of the aircraft in the pits, calling intentions, taxiing, takeoff, touch and go, and landing. The goal is for the student pilot to demonstrate that they understand and practice safety in the pits, as well as having full control in the air. Once the student pilot completes this flight and the instructor is satisfied, the student will receive their "wings" and not be required to be on a buddy box any longer.

As explained in the Stage 2 section above, Solo pilots still **MUST** be under the supervision of a proficient pilot while operating at the field. This allows the solo pilot to become more comfortable by themselves while still having the advice of someone more

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experienced than them, just in case problems arise. This phase usually doesn't last long but everyone's learning curve is different. Ultimately, it is up to your instructor on when to move on, and they will be guiding the student the whole way through.

Solo to Proficient:

When the instructor is satisfied with the solo pilot's confidence and skill, they can conduct the Proficiency Certification Flight. This flight is similar to the Solo Certification Flight, with a few added elements in flight (such as a simulated deadstick landing) to ensure the solo pilot can demonstrate full control under any circumstances. These exams will be largely based on what the instructor feels is best for the student, as they will have the most well rounded idea of how far along a student is in their flying journey.

Optional Instructor's Exam

Any proficient pilot may take the Instructor's Exam if they wish to help out on training nights and beyond. This exam is always conducted by another instructor. The pilot who wishes to become an instructor will fly a foam trainer aircraft on the master radio with the instructor on the slave buddy box. The instructor will put the aircraft into various situations in the sky, and the proficient pilot must recover. If they are successful, they will graduate to instructor!

One of the most important parts of being an instructor is also being a good and welcoming human/teacher to the students. This is a must when welcoming new instructors so we can keep a high level of quality and fun within our program.

Our instructors and board members are always more than willing to help and guide with any questions about the program and how it progresses. As mentioned earlier, every student has different learning capabilities and the purpose of the program is to make sure every student feels fully confident in themselves and their equipment, regardless of the time it takes to progress.