

E - HOW TO READ A LOGBOOK

It is a legal requirement that all pilots keep an accurate record of their flying i.e. a logbook. Whether paper or electronic, it must be in a format that allows the instructor to both read and add a comment/s. More than just a slightly dog-eared souvenir for its owner, a logbook helps instructors plan the next stage in a trainee's progress and helps ensure that nothing vital has been missed. It is also a significant aid to any subsequent instructor conducting, say, a check flight at another club - allowing the level of experience, as distinct from their handling skill to be assessed, or to reveal if the owner has not flown for a long period.

During training, the instructor should write most of the comments in the trainee's logbook to ensure that accurate information is passed on to following instructors. The trainee may, of course, write his own comments, but the word 'demonstration' say, has a more specific meaning to fellow instructors than to trainees. A trainee might write 'Wonderful flight. Instructor very pleased' a comment which, while possibly true, conveys little practical information, but may tell you something about the trainee's psychology.

The SPL Progress Cards normally used during pre-solo training are a supplement to the logbooks. The chief function is a record of satisfactory completion of training for each of the SPL exercises. It specifies those which need to be completed before first solo as well as those required for SPL licence standard. Unlike the logbook, the Training Progress Card must be held by the training organisation and retained with a copy of the completion of training certificate. (Whether in electronic or paper format)

ADVICE TO INSTRUCTORS

Always insist on looking at the logbook before flying. What you are looking for will depend to some extent on the pilot's experience:

- is the flight a solo flight that needs authorising; a visitor to your site, for example?
- Is it a check ride or a training flight, or a bit of both?

After the flight(s), form the habit of writing something informative in the logbook. What you write will depend on the exact nature of the flight. Was it a dual flight for training purposes, or a check ride for a conversion. What was the result?

Most importantly, suggest what the next exercise should be. This is helpful to the next instructor, and you can also suggest to the trainee that they read up about it, to prepare.



[1] What to look for in a Logbook

How current is the pilot?

- how many launches/hours in the last month/the last three months/the last year?
- watch out for the pre-solo pilot who has done 27 launches in the last year, but only two of these in the last quarter; they can do things that can take even experienced instructors by surprise.

- a solo pilot with the same history might be out of practice, but this will depend on the average flight times. One launch per three weeks may be fine for an experienced pilot if the flights average an hour or more. Less experienced pilots can easily be caught out by different weather conditions from when they last flew.
- Keep in mind that low currency is frequently seen on accident report forms. If in doubt, ask where they are on the BGA Currency Barometer and if they do not know what that is, educate them.

[2] How many years has the pilot been flying?

The solo pilot with a hundred hours in his first year deserves plenty of encouragement but may become over-confidence. Most solo pilots will average twenty hours or fewer per year and as a consequence, may be lacking in confidence, not to mention practice. Pilot confidence is an important factor in general progress and performance. The same is true of the pre-solo pilot, though a trainee who has done a hundred hours in his first year and not gone solo, could rightly be regarded as slow, and may be unlikely ever to be alone in the air. However, taking a long time to go solo is not necessarily the mark of a poor pilot.

[3] At how many clubs has the pilot flown?

A drifter? If so, why? Their job may post them about a lot, or they may never have found a club that would send them solo. The solo pilot who drifts from club to club may also do so because of being posted about by their job. It may also be that successive clubs, have quietly suggested they go elsewhere, or, just as likely, disagreements with the club, its policies, its members, its committee, or whatever, have made a break necessary. Alternatively, they may just like extending their knowledge and experience by flying at other sites.

[4] Have there been any long breaks, particularly before the first solo?

This often but not always indicates frustration. Perhaps the trainee is not a fast learner, and it all took 'too long.' They may have been financial issues, or the club they were at might not have been pro-active. Whatever the reason, repeated breaks in training are disadvantageous to the trainee. Vital lessons like stalling may have been overlooked.

[5] How many launches did it take to go solo?

Youngsters may learn very quickly but older trainees will probably take many more launches to go solo. Training at some clubs in areas of difficult terrain may also take longer. However, many factors can and often do increase the launches required. Infrequent flying or large gaps in flying always extend training. Also, as gliding clubs train all-comers, poor aptitude can occasionally be an issue. The latter may occasionally prevent progression to solo flying but can usually be overcome by patience and plenty of flying.

There may be reasons for taking a long time to go solo; poor instruction, or lack of instructional continuity e.g. too many different instructors. The trainee may have been ready for solo for ages, or they may be a slow learner. Equally, most of

the training may have taken place during the winter, or on unsoarable evenings. Do not assume that the trainee is the one who has the problem.

[6] How long did it take to go solo - in months?

The length of time to go solo varies considerably but within a year might be a reasonable goal. Attendance on a week's course should have got them a good way towards solo – weather allowing. Longer periods might indicate that they have suffered some of the problems mentioned in the previous paragraph.

[7] When did the pilot last do any launch failures - real or simulated?

What are the trainees' total hours? Are they solo? If pre-solo, at what stage? From their level of experience, are you confident they will be able to cope if there is a break?

[8] When did they last do any stalling or spinning?

Will they recognise the approaching stall and are their recovery habits correct? Previous comments in the logbook, even in the training syllabus sheet, may not always provide sufficient information on this, particularly if the trainee or solo pilot is unknown to you.

[9] How experienced and current is the pilot on the type of glider to be flown?

Do not expect too much if the glider is a new type, particularly if the trainee is early pre-solo. Even quite experienced pilots can appear remarkably clumsy if the type is significantly different from anything they have flown previously. Does the pilot require a type conversion briefing? If they have done fewer than half a dozen flights on type, or appears nervous, then a quick re-brief would be in order. (see chapter on type conversion)

[10] Can they soar yet?

For solo pilots, soaring flights of an hour or more are the ones to look for. It is usually good news if pre-solo pilots have managed a few flights of, say, half an hour or so, as they will have had plenty of practice in coordination etc, and will be a bit more relaxed about flying.

Questions and Answers can amplify comments in the logbook and help break the ice with the trainee, be they solo or pre-solo.

[10] Does the pilot appear to be 'out of check'?

Part SFCL has recency requirements that include two training flights with an FI(S) in the previous 24 months. This is a

minimum requirement, and many clubs will maintain a requirement for an annual check. These training flights must be used as an opportunity to develop a pilot's skills as well ensuring the basic competency level.

WHAT TO WRITE IN A LOGBOOK

A basic entry for a pre-solo trainee should include -

- What was demonstrated on the flight.
- What the trainee flew well.
- What was attempted but did not work out. Be honest here but avoid giving offence.
- Your suggestions to the next instructor as to the content of the trainee's next flight. For example, *'Trainee to attempt the launch but may require prompting throughout. Demonstrate spin and recovery. Should attempt circuit and landing without prompts.* The next instructor will not then have to use most of the flight finding out things which you already know.

For an experienced solo pilot who has just had a conversion check, the obvious comments would be *OK for the XYZ or Needs more practice at ...* (possibly adding a very brief reason).

Licensed pilot check flights and DoA's (Demonstration of Ability) for endorsements – what to write?

SPL recency requirements include a required number of training flights with an FI(S). SFCL.160SPL.

A suitable form of words might be:

'Training flight completed in accordance with SFCL 160 signature/name/licence no.'

For record of endorsements such as cloud flying:

'SCF training completed in accordance with SFCL xxx Signed, dated and licence number.'

For 9-year Demonstration of ability:

'9 yr Demonstration of Ability IAW SFCL.360 (a)(2) Instructor signature/name/date/licence no.'