



SAFETY

Should I stay or should I go?

Being honest about whether we're fit to fly is crucial, says **Chloe Eriksen**

THE story overleaf, shared by one of our members regarding fitness to fly, highlights some excellent points and important responsibilities that we could all benefit from focusing on.

I have always felt that it is a privilege to fly – a privilege to see the world from above, and one which requires respect and due care and consideration.

Flying is wonderful, but it can be unforgiving, so it's essential that we are all honest about our own capabilities, limitations and fitness.

It is all too easy to fall foul of "push-on-itis", when the weather is seemingly perfect or we had been planning a certain date for a while, or there is pressure from others.

It's so important to always objectively assess the conditions and that of our own body on the day, and not feel under pressure by anyone or anything to go ahead if it doesn't feel quite right.

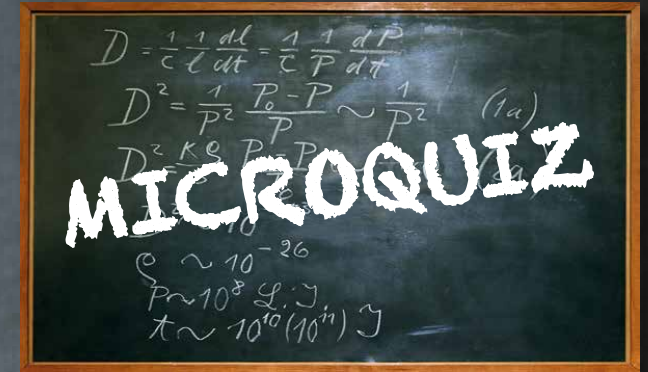
Am I fit to fly? We are the best judge of this, and



A few nerves will keep complacency at bay

I found it useful to always ask myself this question at the end of my pre-flight briefing, as a last check before walking to the aircraft.

Of course, there will be times when we may feel a little nervous. That's natural, and as an experienced glider instructor recently reminded me, those butterflies will keep you safe. A few nerves will keep any complacency at bay.



- 1 What does selection of 7700 on an aircraft secondary surveillance radar transponder indicate?
 - a An emergency
 - b Unlawful interference with the flight
 - c Radio communication failure
- 2 If aircraft A is heading 000° and aircraft B is heading 325°, and both aircraft are on a collision course, which pilot must take action? And what action must they take?
 - a Aircraft A must maintain course and speed and Aircraft B must turn left and pass behind.
 - b Both aircraft must turn right.
 - c Aircraft A must turn to the right and pass behind Aircraft B.
- 3 Which control's primary effect is to move the aircraft about the lateral axis?
 - a Ailerons
 - b Elevator
 - c Rudder
- 4 What does a flashing white light from ATC to an aircraft on the ground indicate?
 - a The aircraft should return to the starting position.
 - b The aircraft should taxi to the hold point.
 - c The aircraft may proceed as required.
- 5 Which type of cloud is most likely to occur at low level in a stable atmosphere and produce drizzle?
 - a Cumuliform
 - b Cirrocumulus
 - c Stratiform



MF's quizmaster Lawrence Bell is the developer of QuizAero, the online groundschool for microlight student pilots, quizaero.co.uk.

Answers overleaf



GASCo, the General Aviation Safety Council, is a charity whose members are aviation organisations. Its aim is to make aviation safer through education. It presents the CAA safety evenings, runs seminars and provides safety information through its magazine and website, gasco.org.uk.



CHIRP, the Confidential Human Incident Reporting Programme, reviews and analyses reports from pilots, then publishes them so others can learn. Get the app at chirp.co.uk.

Tired = tiddly

Someone once told me that being tired has the same effect as being drunk, and that thought has always stuck with me. It slows reaction time, affects decision-making and can cause us to miss important visual and audio cues.

In short, being tired is the equivalent of knocking back a bottle of wine before you go flying – and I know we would never dream of doing that.

The medical process we use to fly G-registered aircraft in UK airspace is the Pilot Medical Declaration, or PMD, and it requires us to re-visit the assessment should there be any change in our medical status.

All details can be found on the CAA webpage under "medical requirements for private pilots".

This forms the base level of medical fitness, but we must also be aware of feeling under the weather before we go flying.

Not only can having a cold impair your judgement and make normal tasks more difficult, it can also cause damage to your ears if you operate at altitude. The mnemonic IMSAFE is designed to achieve just what it says.

Currency and recency

The military has an unsurprisingly stringent approach to currency, and goes into great detail on certain disciplines that must have been practised within a certain time frame.

Of course, we were lucky in being able to fly most days, but there were still odd periods where we didn't fly, and coming back from one of these periods always needed to be handled carefully.

Muscle memory will only get you so far, and the legal currency requirements do not necessarily ensure competency, so I ask you all to assess your own recency and competency.

Consider a flight with an instructor if you feel a little rusty. Run through the flight in your head first. I've said it before and will continue to say it: armchair flying is free, excellent preparation and completely safe!

The choice is yours

Flying is a privilege, and a wonderful responsibility. The decision to go or not is ours, and we must all consider this carefully before committing aviation. You hold the power, so please wield it with care.

Angels' wings

The story overleaf is a brave and honest account of events that could so easily have ended differently. I commend the openness from our member in sharing this story with us.

The appraisal of the account speaks for itself, and the writer demonstrates excellent self-awareness.

This really could have been any of us, and I'm sure it will resonate with many. I don't imagine that there is a pilot out there who hasn't taken to the skies when they felt a little below par, and I believe that this instructor has demonstrated a valuable lesson to us all and will no doubt pass on this experience to his or her students.

A little mental trick I have played in the past is to ask myself honestly what I would say to the board of enquiry after the event... could I honestly say that I had made the best decisions... had I acted in the best possible way?

Instructors hold a great deal of responsibility: not only do we have to look after ourselves, but also be ready for any mistakes that our student may make, while also setting the example. We need to be on our game in order to do all of this effectively.

We are all human. We make mistakes and then we learn. I hope that someone out there will learn from this valuable story. □



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