

My Recommended Gear For Flight Training

Once you have selected your flight school the dream of becoming a pilot is on its way and if you are like I was, you cannot sit still! The next step is getting prepared for your arrival at the school! There are some things that are best acquired before you arrive and then some things are best left until you get to school.

The biggest problem I fell victim to and that of many other students is that once you see \$60,000 sitting in your account to pay for your flight training, the temptation to buy lots of stuff you THINK you need is very strong.

This list is going to show you some of the most popular and recommended gear that I have personally used to help you get ready for your first training flight! Many of these things I still use today and if you wish to see what these items are, you can check out my *Recommended Gear Page* that I use as a full-time helicopter pilot right [HERE](#) at pilot teacher.com.

When clicking on any link in this PDF, if you hold down the CMD (Mac) or CTRL (Win) button while clicking the link, it will open the item in a new browser tab so you don't lose this page!

Headset

Unless you are attending a very small flight school you will need to have your own headset. Even if the school does provide headsets in their aircraft you need to also think about how many sweaty ears and heads those headsets have been used on! Not a very nice thought. A headset is one of those investments that will last you a very long time if you look after it.

I still have my original Bose Aviation X headset that I purchased when I was in flight school almost 2 decades ago and it still works awesome! Although I now wear a helmet for my day to day flight operations, I use my headset when I'm training or in the simulator. It has more than paid for itself!

NOTE:

Headsets come in both Helicopter and Fixed-Wing models. Ensure you purchase the right headset to suit your aircraft. Helicopter models will come with a single male plug while Fixed-Wing models have 2 male plugs for connecting your headset into the aircraft.

Good Option:

David Clark H10-13.4 - Around \$330 at [Amazon.com](#)

Better Option:

Lightspeed Sierra ANR - Around \$650 at [Amazon.com](#)

Best Option:

Bose A20 - Around - From \$1100 at [Amazon.com](#)



Sunglasses

Sunglasses are a very personal selection but are an absolute must for protecting your eyes while flying and preparing your aircraft for its flight. You may have sunglasses already, but if you don't, this is where you need to get some.

Good quality UV protection is paramount! For every 1000ft of altitude gained, the amount of UV radiation increases by 5%, therefore when a pilot flies at 10,000ft their eyes are receiving 50% more UV radiation than on the ground!

NOTE:

One thing you need to be careful of is avoiding Polarized Lenses. Polarized Lenses can filter out or alter certain shades of color and this can be exacerbated when progressing into aircraft with glass screen displays – also known as a Glass Cockpit. As a pilot, you need to be able to see when aircraft or engine parameters are Green, Yellow or almost RED.

Some of the best brands for pilots are from:

AO Flight Gear
Randolph
Oakley
Ray-Ban



You can find a great selection for both Men & Women [HERE](#) at PilotTeacher.com, along with a handy sizing guide.

Watch

Just as sunglasses are a very personal selection, a watch is no different. A reliable watch is almost as important to a pilot as a headset. Not only is a good watch required to ensure you show up for your flights on time, but most of the cross-country flying you will do as a student will require accurate timings to validate your position. You will use your watch all the time for recording engine start and stop times, wheels/skids up and down times, ETA, Time Enroute, Fuel Burn, and many, many more.

Just like my Bose headset, I still have my Citizen Navihawk watch I was bought as a present when I began flight school and I still use it today – albeit being scratched to heck from years of bush flying, but if you buy a good one, it will last you years or even decades. Many of the tried and tested watch manufacturers now make watches specifically designed for use in aviation, whether they are just very simple to read, or like my watch, have an E6B Whiz-Wheel in the outer bezel!

Some of the best brands for pilots are from:

Casio
Timex
Citizen
Hamilton



You can find a great selection for both Men & Women [HERE](#) at PilotTeacher.com

Flight Bag

As nerdy as it sounds, you will begin to accumulate a lot of gear required for your flight training, and turning up to a flight or ground school lesson without a certain piece of equipment or book not only wastes time, but can reflect on your preparedness especially if attempting to gain employment with the flight school upon graduation!

Fixed-wing students will usually take their flight bags into the cockpit and depending on the aircraft, a well-organized and correctly sized flight bag acts as a very handy co-pilot. Helicopter students are not so lucky. The Collective control takes up the space a flight bag could sit so most helicopter pilots will need to carefully arrange their gear before liftoff to enable easy access during the flight.

Good Option:

Simple Flyer Alpha Pilot Headset Bag - Around \$45 at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Better Option:

ASA Air Classic Flight Bag - Around \$75 at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Best Option:

Brightline Bags Flex B7 Modular Bag - From \$200 at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Logbook

Everything in aviation is tracked by hours, including your flight time. Keeping an accurate record of every flight you do is the only way to show a future employer your experience. This is where a Pilot Logbook comes in.

After every flight you need to fill out a logbook so that every element of the flight and your growing experience can be logged.

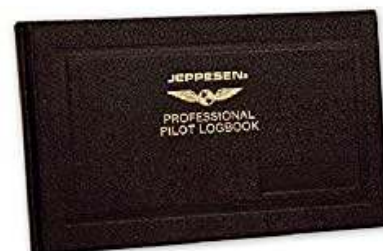
There are two ways that I ALWAYS recommend. First is by using a paper logbook and the second is a digital logbook. By keeping both of these up-to-date you will never have the misfortune of losing your entire careers proof of what you have done! I've heard horror stories of logbooks being dropped in water or digital copies lost when a hard drive went bad. This is where two copies in different formats keep you protected.

For a paper logbook, I recommend you buy a larger Professional Pilot Logbook if you are looking at a career in aviation, or a smaller one if you just plan to fly for pleasure.

The one I use and recommend is this one from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

For the Software Logbook, I recommend SafeLog. It is on an online subscription-based logbook, but is one of the most widely used by professional pilots with a great pedigree and quality reviews.

You can find out more information about SafeLog [Here at PilotLog.com](https://www.pilotlog.com)



Kneeboard

A kneeboard is like a table that straps to your leg to allow the most pertinent information needed for your flight to be right there ALL THE TIME!

There is a vast array of kneeboards from just a simple board to ones with pockets, pen holders, and even ones to hold an iPad/tablet.

When you begin to move into the cross-country or IFR portions of flight training this is where the kneeboard and hands-free operation really shine. It is definitely one of the Must-Have's on any pilots shopping list.

You can find a great selection of KneeBoards [Here at Amazon.com](#)



FOM/POH

No matter which aircraft you fly you will need a copy of its Flight Operation Manual (FOM) or Pilots Operating Handbook (POH) – Depending on what each manufacturer calls it.

The FOM/POH is the manual published by the manufacturer that lists all the things you can and should not do with the aircraft, its limitations, normal and emergency procedures, performance charts and data, equipment and systems descriptions. As a pilot, it is your duty to understand your aircraft inside out, and becoming familiar with the flight manual will be one of the first things your instructor will be requiring you to do.

Most aircraft used for training have their flight manuals available for purchase but once you begin to get into the bigger and more complex aircraft the flight manual will be given to you as part of the initial training course. My flight manuals for the Sikorsky S76 and Agusta AW139 were two very thick manuals for each aircraft, so I dread to think what the manuals for the Boeing 747 or Airbus A380 must be like!!

See here for a selection of the most popular aircraft flight manuals:

[Cessna Manuals – Click Here](#)

[Piper Manuals – Click Here](#)

[Robinson Helicopter Manuals – Click Here](#)

[Guimbal Cabri Helicopter Manuals – Click Here](#)



FAR/AIM

The FAR/AIM stands for Federal Aviation Regulations/Aeronautical Information Manual and is referred to in many places as the 'Aviation Bible'. This book is a must for every pilot flying in the US and is split into two parts:

1. FAR – (Federal Aviation Regulations) This is all the regulations applicable to flying in the US under Titles 14 & 49 of the CFR – Code of Federal Regulations. If you need to know the answer to a legality in flying this is the resource you turn to. The FAR will list all regulations pertaining to flight training, commercial operations, flying at night, medical requirements, airport regulations, you name it it is in here, but be warned it takes some training to find your way around it.

If you have selected the right flight school, your instructor will be well versed in the FAR's and will train you on the most important points you will need based on the license/certificate you are training for.

2. AIM – (Aeronautical Information Manual) This section lists all of the 'Good To Know' things in aviation. It is like a reference manual for all things that are not a regulation. Things like navigation procedures, air traffic control procedures, airspace, and medical facts will be contained in this section.

Once you arrive at flight school you will see other students FAR/AIM manuals that are covered in tabs, notes, and highlighter. This is why you need a paper copy of the most current FAR/AIM when you arrive. As you progress through the varying licenses and endorsements your own FAR/AIM will become as highlighted and tabbed as your fellow students. I remember feeling quite overwhelmed the first time I saw a well used FAR/AIM, but it is like making a huge Sunday Roast – One part of the meal at a time!

You can find the latest Paper Copy of the [FAR/AIM Here at Amazon.com](#)

To also help you, for quick reference on a computer, you can find the online version to save in your Browser Favorites [HERE](#)



Whiz-Wheel or E6B Flight Computer

There are so many calculations and conversions you need to master in aviation that it can be mind boggling! Luckily there is a great device called an E6B that has been around since the dawn of time to aid pilots in those calculations and conversions.

Although the learning curve for the E6B can be steep, once mastered, this simple slide-rule type device will allow you to quickly convert or calculate any number you need, which is a great asset while in flight.

Once the basic E6B Flight Computer has been mastered I found the switch to a digital version, especially during the flight planning stages very convenient, however, the Whiz-Wheel is still far easier to use one-handed while in flight!

Tip: Here are some great training videos on [YouTube](#) for how to use your E6B Flight Computer!

You can view a great selection of [E6B Flight Computers Here at Amazon.com](#)



Flashlight/Headlight

At some point in your training, you will be having to pre/postflight and fly in darkness. To safely see what you are doing and looking at, a flashlight and/or headlamp is essential.

I personally like to have both as a flashlight is handy during inspections, but a headlight is handy for when you need hands off ability, especially when flying.

One thing to bear in mind is that a bright flashlight is great for inspections but they are terrible for destroying your night vision, once acquired. This is where a light with a red light or lens is essential. Flying with a red lens on your light while flying allows you to see the important information you need but keeps your night vision!



This is a great, lightweight Dual-Color LED Flashlight | [Recommend from amazon.com](#)

This is the Dual-Color Headlamp | [Recommend, also from amazon.com](#)

Plotter

It won't be long before you are introduced to the art of planning a flight. Careful route selection, measuring, marking and analysis of the charts are all required for a successful flight from Point A to Point B.



The longer the distance, the more planning is required and one of the most useful tools that you will need during this stage is an Aviation Plotter. This device combines many functions onto one device to allow you to efficiently measure and mark in one go.

You can find a great selection of Aviation Plotters [Here at Amazon.com](#)

Timer

Accurate timing during cross-country flights can be the difference of an easy, stress-free flight where all your visual waypoints show up as expected, or you get completely lost and your stress-level goes through the roof!

The simple way to combat this is an easy-to-use, easy to mount, and easy to reset digital timer. Watches can be used but more mental math is sometimes required, so this is where a timer mounted on your Kneeboard, that is easy to see and operate really helps the flight go smoother!

I personally have always liked the timers with dual timing functions. This way you can set a timer for total time enroute and then time each flight leg individually. It is a personal preference and you will see many timers around the school once you arrive.



This is the type of timer that I personally recommend [Here at Amazon.com](#)

It is cheap, small, easy to use and mount, has dual timers with count up and down functions, and alarms if you wish to use them.

Online Training Courses

When you first begin flight training the amount of information you have to learn can be very overwhelming! Taking it step-by-step is the key to absorbing this fire hose of information that will just seem to keep coming. It does get easier with time but one of the best ways to learn is by using multiple resource medias.

This is where Online Learning Courses really come into their own. Studying from the same material day in, day out can not only become fatiguing, but monotonous.

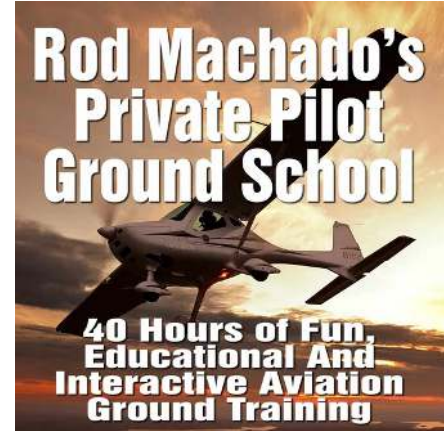
By varying the delivery of the training material it really helps with retention. There are some fantastic training courses out there and these are some of my favorites:

[Rod Machado](#) - Ground School

[Dauntless-Soft](#) - Exam Preps

[Plane English](#) - Communications (Use Coupon *PilotTeach* for 10% Off!!)

There is a vast array of training material to pick from and their delivery methods are very easy to absorb. You will not go wrong with these training courses!



Training Manuals & Books

Books play such an important role in your training so make sure you set aside several hundred dollars for them as the cost can soon add up!



I find books are a nice learning tool as you can highlight and make notes in them and they are great for quick referencing, even years later – As you can see from my stack which are closing in on 20 years old!

Your local flight school should have a shop where you can buy them but also be sure to check out the pricing online as some great deals can be had, especially if you're buying a bundle.

Here are some of my favourite and most popular books for training fundamentals:

(All Links to Amazon.com)

- * [Pilots Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Airplane Flying Handbook \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Helicopter Flying Handbook \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Principals of Helicopter Flight \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Instrument Flying Handbook \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Aviation Weather \(FAA\)](#)
- * [Private Pilot Test Prep \(ASA\)](#)
- * [Instrument Commercial \(Jeppesen\)](#)

In addition to these books, many of the major aviation publishers have created Private Pilot Kits or Bundles where you can get many of the supplies, books, and training aids listed above in one complete bundle helping you to save money.



Here are some of the most popular bundles you will get to see around flight school or your local flying club:

- * [ASA Private Pilot Kit - Part 61](#)
- * [ASA Complete Private Pilot Kit](#)
- * [Jeppesen Private Pilot Kit](#)
- * [Gleim Private Pilot Kit](#)

Not Essential Gear, But Really Helpful

In addition to 'The Essentials listed above', below is a list of items I regularly see around the flight schools that can be really useful in helping your training progress.

If your budget can stretch to them then they can really help your training and improve and keep your flying skills refined once you have your pilot certificate/s!

PC/Mac Flight Simulator

When it comes to learning procedures and checklists, a desktop aircraft simulator is a great learning tool. For a few hundred dollars you can add the flight controls to your laptop or desktop and have an identical replica of your training aircraft in your home/dorm room to practice any time you wish.



I have seen a remarkable distinction in the students that went home and practiced the maneuvers we had just flown compared to those that didn't. Simulators help you to quickly develop muscle memory, checklist familiarity and cockpit scans.

For the price of a few flying lessons, a simple simulator setup can dramatically increase your training progress!

For more information on Flight Simulators I wrote an entire article dedicated to them which you can find here at PilotTeacher.com:

[PC Flight Simulators: Can You Really Learn To Fly On Them?](#)

Hand-Held Radio

When you first begin flying the talking that goes on between your instructor and air traffic control (ATC) is another language and can be VERY intimidating! With an understanding of what the controller is expecting from you and vice-versa, it then comes down to practice.

I have had many students, myself included, that were complete nervous wrecks when it came to pushing that button and talking to a stranger, and here are two ways I have personally used and recommend ever since:

1. Buy yourself a hand-held VHF Transceiver or Scanner. By having your own radio, you can go and spend your spare time sitting by a busy airport (Training Airport is even better) and just listen to the talk between the tower and the aircraft. When you start to feel confident, practice doing the calls (but never key the mic!!!) that a flying aircraft would make, just imagine you are the pilot in command. Then see if the calls you practice make sense.

Transceivers allow you to talk with ATC and are more expensive, while Scanners just allow you to listen and are cheaper, just be sure to get a radio with frequencies 108 to 137 MHz as this is the band dedicated to aviation.

[You can find a great selection of Aviation Radios in our Store Here](#)



2. The second great method of learning ATC is using a software-based learning tool and this can work really well. The software gives you many examples and allows you to practice stage by stage until you have the confidence you need.

REMEMBER: ATC is there to help YOU. Without pilots, they have no job!

One of the best ways to learn the aviation language is with a simulator like this one from PlaneEnglishSim.com

A Great tool that will help you master your radio without feeling shy, and turn you into a confident pilot!

An added bonus is that they will give you 10% off by using the code **PilotTeach** at checkout!

[Click Here](#) to head over to PlaneEnglishSim.com and see their Super Helpful courses for both VFR & IFR, new pilots, and veteran pilots – They have it all and you will not regret using their tools! I used a software very similar back when I learned many years ago and it was a Game-Changer!

iPad

To many, this may seem a bit extravagant for a cockpit but with the many Apps available today an iPad can become a very useful tool and in fact, many companies have already gone to complete Electronic Flight Bags and do away with having to carry the many charts, procedures, and manuals required by law.



The iPad Mini for most pilots is the perfect companion for its size in a cockpit. It can be easily mounted via a permanent cradle, or the use of a suction/yoke mount can easily keep the screen in view but not in the way.

A full-size iPad, in my opinion, is just too big for most cockpits, unless you are flying for the airlines, at which point you will most likely be provided with a company-issued device. You may notice I say iPad and not tablet. The One and Only reason for this is that currently ForeFlight is only available for Apple devices and having a tablet without ForeFlight is not much use in my opinion.

Foreflight is one of the best Moving Map/Flight Planning apps used in aviation all over the world. It is now owned by Boeing and I can tell you that after personally using it for many years the iPad/Foreflight combination is a game changer!

You can find out more about Foreflight Here at foreflight.com

An iPad is a big expense, but if you are thinking about purchasing one and would like to check out This One at Amazon.com, I would receive a small, no-cost-to-you commission for referring you to Amazon and I would be very grateful for your purchase.

iPad Cockpit Mount

Having a secure way to mount your tablet in the cockpit is of paramount importance. Not only having a system to allow you to mount it where it is comfortable to see and operate, but it needs to be secure! A tablet falling into the pedals at the wrong moment could spell disaster.

For these reasons, I recommend the PIVOT cases and mounts for the iPad. We have been using their system in our aircraft for the last 18 months and I can say they are fantastic! The rugged case encapsulates the iPad and comes with a cover that integrates into a stand when using it outside of the aircraft. When it's time to go flying, the cover unclips and the iPad easily clips into the moveable mounting arm that stays in the aircraft! Simple, effective, secure, and fast!

Because of this, I have asked the U.S. distributor for a discount code for you and they have generously given you 10% off any of the PIVOT iPad range!



See the PIVOT line up [HERE at flyboys.com](#) and be sure to use the Discount Code **PilotTeacher** to get 10% off!!

We have the RAM MOUNT systems in our aircraft and the PIVOT cases integrate easily using a ball adapter. We have some aircraft with the mounts installed directly into the cockpit, and for those without, we use the RAM Suction Mount system. Both work great with the PIVOT System.

For a Great Selection of the RAM MOUNT System, you can view them [HERE at Amazon.com](#)

To see just how good this case/mounting system is please check out the review video I did on them which you can find on the Pilot Teacher [YouTube Channel HERE](#)