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Moreno: It's never too late to learn to fly

Posted By [eric.yates](#) On March 13, 2010 @ 12:31 pm In [A Conversation with San Diego](#) | [2 Comments](#)

I always wanted to learn to fly. I love the peaceful views from thousands of feet up in the air, and piloting an airplane is a challenge I've always wanted to face. I graduated from the Naval Academy where many of my classmates ended up serving as pilots in the Navy and Marine Corps. But since I didn't have 20/20 vision this was not an option for me. Years later, I had corrective eye surgery but it was too late for me to begin military flight training.



Then recently, I discovered that my 25-year-old, unused, Montgomery Bill GI Bill would cover a good portion of flight training.

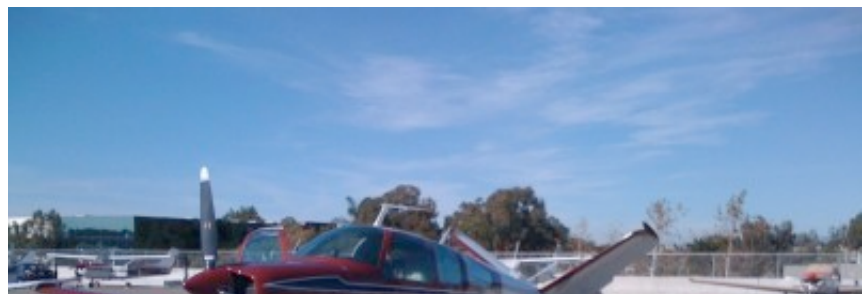
A view of the Carlsbad power plant, during takeoff.

The first step was to figure out if I would enjoy flying in a single-engine plane.

Fortunately, most flight schools offer a 30 to 60 minute "discovery flight" so you can see if you enjoy it. My discovery flight was courtesy of a neighborhood friend, Jack, who took me up in his Beechcraft Bonanza in early January. I was in heaven — looking down on the San Diego beaches as we followed the coastline while cruising along at twice the highway speed limit. Jack has owned his plane for about 40 years, and he talked about how convenient it is to take quick trips to places like Catalina, Big Bear, and Palm Springs — destinations that would normally take several hours to reach.

OK, now I was hooked. First, I had to fill out a lot of paperwork and get a medical exam in order to get approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to take lessons. Second, I had to choose a flight school. I toured the three flight schools at the Carlsbad airport. I found out that obtaining a private pilot certification typically costs about \$7,000 to \$9,000 which includes the plane rental, about 55 hours of lessons, course materials, pilot supplies, the fees for testing, medical exam, and the end "check ride."

Most flight schools offer a pay as you go, self-paced curriculum accompanied by textbooks, DVDs, or online training. After investigating several schools I ended up choosing one that uses a new online course that I liked.



I'm a little surprised at how

quickly the training has progressed. Each time we go up for a flight I'm learning something new which is building on the previous lessons, and I'm not always confident that I've mastered each maneuver. But I'm told that's to be expected as we keep practicing what needs to be perfected. I've already added a little extra-instruction into my training to refine my "slow-flight" and stall recovery techniques. These are important maneuvers since you need to fly slowly when landing, but if you go too slowly the plane will stall, and you could crash.



A Beechcraft Bonanza single engine.

In my first 10 days of flight training, I've flown nine times, logged 12.6 hours of flight time, and have 11 landings under my belt with the assistance of my instructor, Dougal, who has been very patient with me. Having just completed my latest progress check with a senior instructor, I'm cleared to continue on to the next phase of training.

Joe Moreno is the founder of the photo sharing site Epics3.com, based in Carlsbad, CA, and also provides cloud computing consulting services to businesses. You can follow Joe on Twitter [@JoMoreno](https://twitter.com/JoMoreno)^[1] or reach him at (760)444-4721.

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