



# Your Voice



## *An instructor's words matter*

“**S**o now that I am a CFI, do you have any advice or pro tips for me?” I asked. My DPE smiled and said, “Never forget that you are the voice the student will hear when you are not in the airplane.” With that profound nugget of wisdom, he shook my hand and wished me the best of luck.

I sat down at the table in our hangar and thought about what he had said. It was such a profound statement that I found myself a little taken aback. Sure, I often heard my instructor’s voice in my head while I was flying, but between digesting the FARs, teaching mock lessons ad nauseum, and delving into the minutia of every FAA publication I could get my hands on in preparation for my checkride, I guess I never quite appreciated just how profound the responsibility and privilege was to teach someone how to fly and how much weight my words and actions carried.

Over the coming days, I spent a lot of time figuring out what kind of “voice” I wanted to be. It turns out the answer to that question felt nearly as complex as the CFI checkride itself.

I knew I wanted to be the voice of encouragement, and not anger. To lower my voice when they do something unexpected, not raise it. I wanted to be their biggest cheerleader and celebrate their successes at each point along the way. Their success would be my success, and their failures my failures.

I knew I wanted to be the voice that was reassuring. To remind them that things

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**By Michael D. Hodge Jr.**

are sometimes hard, and that the presence of challenges doesn't mean that they don't have the intellect or kinesthetic ability to become a pilot. To sit down and help them dissect the obstacles they are facing and see how we can work together as a team to get through them.

I knew I wanted to be the voice of patience. Sure, listening to the ASOS for the umpteenth time this lesson is annoying, and answering the same question over and over can make one question their sanity. However, it's important to remember that we are all learning, especially student pilots. Their inability to retain the wind information despite it being the fifth time they've listened to it isn't due to some desire to annoy their flight instructor; it's just that they are overwhelmed. I find maintaining that perspective important.


I knew I wanted to be the voice that reminded them to slow down and think. Don't rush through your checklists. Yes, I know that you've done the preflight a thousand times by now and you "have it memorized." Still, pull out the checklist and use it, and if the day comes when you are in an emergency and your thoughts are racing as fast as your heart is, take a deep breath, slow down, and think. Put aside your emotional brain for a second, and work through the problem logically and deliberately. I believe in you; now believe in yourself and FLY. THE. AIRPLANE.

I knew I wanted to be the voice that encourages a thirst for knowledge. To motivate in whatever way I can to be a mass consumer of all things aviation. To help encourage that desire to keep pushing, to keep striving to improve, all while reminding them to embrace the journey. The more we learn, the safer we are. Let's see if we can change our perspective of the theoretical knowledge from something we have to learn to something we want to learn.

Finally, I knew I wanted to be the voice that encouraged my students to be good stewards of aviation. To reach out to their fellow students and help one another through the challenges that obtaining a new certificate brings. To encourage them to get involved in the local community and give back. What a great gift we

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rush through a checklist because the lesson is running behind or I find myself being dismissive of a student's frustrations or concerns, I'm reminded of that quote. What kind of example am I setting? Am I modeling the behavior I want to see in my student? Asking myself those questions helps me maintain a healthy sense of perspective and pushes me to be a better flight instructor, and human.

To old instructors, and new instructors alike, I'd like to ask: What kind of voice are you? 

have to be able to do this. Why not share it with the world?

I'm not sure my DPE knows just how important that one sentence was. In a lot of ways, it encouraged me to sit and really think about what kind of flight instructor I wanted to be. I'll be the first to admit that I am human, and all the above is more of a journey rather than a destination.

But every time I have the desire to

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