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### Soaring to New Heights: A Career as a Pilot

The famous movie *Airplane's* character Rumac said, "Striker, listen, and you listen close: flying a plane is no different than riding a bicycle, just a lot harder to put baseball cards in the spokes." Do not get any ideas that pilots are as dumb as rocks like this quote suggests from the movie *Airplane*. Contrary to the popular belief, flying an airplane is safer than driving in a car. That record of safety is only achievable because of highly experienced pilots. The vocation I am interested in pursuing is a career in commercial aviation as I have researched the education required, explored the outlook, and investigated the duties and responsibilities for becoming a commercial aviation pilot. Becoming a commercial aviation pilot is difficult to accomplish, because to become a pilot, you need to have a college degree, a commercial pilot's license, night and instrument ratings, and over a thousand hours of flight experience. All this work does pay off in the end because a pilot get paid six figure salaries for his or her very important and stressful job.

Overall the education and training to become a pilot is quite extensive. Commercial aviation pilots need to be highly educated and trained to safely and properly fly aircraft from point a to point b. One of the first steps to a pilot's license is to graduate high school. After graduation, graduates looking to become a commercial pilot with a re-

gional airline recommend to have at least two years of college, but most major commercial airlines recommend at least four years of college. In fact, a qualified pilot could get a job with a smaller regional airline with just a high school degree, but the influx of many qualified pilots with college degrees has made some smaller airlines and most major airlines require that all new commercial pilots have a college degree: "In fact, most entrants to their occupation have a college degree. Because the number of college educated applicants continues to increase, many employers are making a college degree a requirement"("Aircraft Pilots and Flight Engineers"1). Since major airlines and some smaller regional airlines are starting to require a college degree a pilot should have a college degree on his or her resume to make himself or herself marketable to any company he or she applies to.

After the completion of two to four years of college, graduates will need to obtain a private pilot's license by going to a Federal Aviation Administration certified flight school. The requirements to obtain a private pilot's license are twenty hours of instruction, ten hours of solo flight time, three hours of cross-country instruction, five hours of solo cross country flight, three hours of night cross country flight, and three take offs and landings to a full stop with pattern. After obtaining a private pilot's license, private pilots must then log at least 1,500 hours of flight time, obtain instrument ratings and a night rating in complex high performance aircraft. Complex high performance aircraft are those which have engines with more than 200 horsepower, retractable landing gear, and have variable pitch propellers. After receiving instrument and night ratings in complex high performance aircraft, pilots must now obtain a commercial pilot's license by passing required exams and logging the required amount of hours for that airplane. Af-

ter completion of the commercial pilot license certificate, pilots must obtain instrument, night, and cross country ratings in the aircraft they will be flying as a commercial aviation pilot: "Because of the vastly different handling of each vehicle, you need to be certified in each class of aircraft you fly"("Machado" F2). Since pilots are mandated to be certified in each class of aircraft they will ever fly, most pilots are able to fly more than one aircraft. For example, all commercial pilots who fly jumbo jets have ratings in small general purpose aircraft, high powered turboprop aircraft, and small jets because to pilot a jumbo jet pilots must build up experience from simpler aircraft before they attempt flying extremely advanced aircraft. Therefore, a career as a commercial aviation pilot requires an extensive amount of education.

Also, there are many mandatory duties and responsibilities that a commercial aviation pilot must perform. Before a pilot gets anywhere near an aircraft, he or she must create a flight plan that conforms to the Federal Aviation Administration's procedures and regulations. After creation of a flight plan, the first duty a pilot must do before even entering the aircraft is to do a walk around to check the pitot tube, static tube, ailerons, flaps, elevators, vertical stabilizer, engine cowling, engine, propeller, fuselage, landing gear, tires, windscreen, and calculate the center of gravity to insure a safe flight . All pilots are required by the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure the safety and integrity of their aircraft before each and every flight: "Before departure, pilots plan their flights carefully. They thoroughly check their aircraft to make sure that engines, controls, instruments, and other systems are functioning properly"("Farr" 562). Following their walk around, pilots must run through their pre-flight check list. The pre-flight check list usually varies from plane to plane but there are general duties that remain the same.

The general duties of their pre-flight check is make sure all flight instruments are in working order, make sure the gas tank was filled with the proper amount of fuel for that flight, check that the radios are functioning properly, and make sure that they have all the proper maps and other required navigation equipment.

Next, after performing the pre-flight check, the pilot would contact the nearest air traffic control tower requesting permission to taxi to the runway and takeoff. Once in the air, the pilot regularly contacts air traffic control to change altitude and request weather reports from other pilots at different altitudes.

When approaching the airport, pilots much contact air traffic control and request permission to land. At this same time, pilots must also watch for light gun signals coming from the tower in case of radio failure. Depending on the airport when on the final approach, a pilot must watch the visual approach slope indicator lights or the precision approach path indicator lights to see if they are on the glide path or if he or she is approaching the runway too high or too low. After the pilot lands the aircraft, he or she will unload all passengers and baggage and move the aircraft to its hangar or parking space. When the pilot has the airplane in its hangar, he or she has to fill out the post-flight report and submit it to the Federal Aviation Administration and to his or her employer.

Also if a pilot is the pilot in command of an aircraft, he or she is responsible for overseeing that all necessary safety steps are done. The pilot in command is also responsible for handling any in flight emergency if it may occur. According to "*Rod Machado's Private Pilot Handbook*" the pilot in command of the aircraft is legally in

charge of the aircraft and is responsible for handling and accepting any consequences of a violation, in flight emergency, or unhappy event:

The pilot in command is the captain of the ship and is responsible for the safe operation of the aircraft during flight. He or she is also the person the FAA will look to in the event of a violation, accident, or other unhappy event. No matter what the category or class of aircraft, there is one (and only one) legal pilot in command at any particular instant during a flight. (F4)

The pilot in command of an aircraft has more responsibility than the copilot or flight engineer. The pilot in command is responsible for the success and safety of the flight and for flying the aircraft from point a to point b. If anything goes wrong though the pilot in command is legally in charge and he or she must face the legal consequences. Thus, these particular duties are required to become a pilot.

Furthermore, a career in commercial aviation has a wonderful job outlook for the future making a commercial aviation pilot a sound and secure career choice for the future. A career as a commercial aviation pilot is a sound and a secure choice because employment prospects for commercial pilots are expected to grow thirteen percent by 2016. Because most commercial pilots were hired between the late 1960's through the 1980s, they are now or soon to be reaching the mandatory retirement age and that in turn will create thousands of new job openings.

Also, many older pilots will have to retire early because they can't maintain their qualifications. According to "*America's top 300 Jobs Eight Edition*" normally many pilots do not leave their occupation each year because of the investment in specialized non transferable training, and high earnings. But in the next ten to fifteen years many pilots

who were hired in the late sixties will be forced to retire because of their age:

The number of job openings resulting from the need to replace pilots who retire or leave the occupancy has traditionally been low. Aircraft pilots usually have a strong attachment to their occupation because it requires a substantial investment in specialized training that is not transferable to other fields, and it commonly offers very high earnings. Pilots who were hired in the late 1960's are approaching the mandatory retirement age and, thus, several thousand job openings are expected to be generated every year. (564)

Because of the many job openings in the near future, it would be the perfect time to enter the field as a commercial aviation pilot.

In addition there is a rising demand for air travel. The demand for global shipment of freight is increasing. Due to the rising security of freight shipped by passenger aircraft, more freight will have to be shipped by dedicated freight carriers like Fed Ex. Those carriers will have to respond to the increase in business by hiring more pilots to fly the aircraft that will transport this freight.

However, due to larger aircraft and better computer systems companies will be able to cut jobs because newer aircraft, and their computer systems require only two pilots, not three to fly them. Because of the larger aircraft of today companies that employ commercial pilots will be able to cut jobs because they can decrease the number of aircraft and pilots to keep up with their day to day operations.

As the population grows, the demand for air travel increases and the need for qualified pilots also increases. Because the demand for air travel is increasing, and be-

cause many pilots are reaching the mandatory retirement age, a career as a commercial pilot is a sound choice for the future.

In conclusion, after thoroughly researching a career as a commercial aviation pilot, I believe that this career is my dream job. I love everything about commercial aviation and the sciences of flight involved. So, in ten years, you might find me in the cockpit of a Boeing 787 Dreamliner flying you from point a to point b.

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