

Take 'em Flying!

Make a Difference...

Share Flight with Others

AOPA members are the best ambassadors for general aviation. You're at every airport in the country. You are in a unique position to help general aviation at the local level.



One of the best ways to win more friends for general aviation is to take people flying!

An appropriate and well-planned orientation flight is the quickest way to overcome misconceptions about general aviation while demonstrating its ease and safety.

Planning on your part will ensure that the person you fly will come away from the flight with new respect for the safety, benefits – and pleasures – of flying GA aircraft.

Who should you fly?

No doubt, you have a friend or colleague who has expressed an interest in your flying. If you have never given an orientation flight, starting with a **friend** or **coworker** makes sense. You will feel relaxed and have a practice flight or two under your belt so that you can give a flight to someone you may not know as well. For example, you may want to take an **air traffic controller**, a **teacher**, a **reporter** or a **political** or **business leader**.

Although it is an important event any time you introduce someone to general aviation, you will fly different people for different reasons. The majority of general aviation pilots say that they were introduced to flying through a friend or family member. You can open the world of flying to a friend by making their flight with you a positive and enjoyable experience.

Here are some other reasons for taking members of your community on an orientation flight:

When you fly a reporter, you can do more than introduce that person to flying. Your words and actions can erase misconceptions about general aviation that can result in erroneous news reporting. You will be giving the reporter the background needed for fair and accurate reporting.

When you fly a teacher, you will give that teacher ideas to spark student interest in math, physics, geography, and more. Encouraging teachers to explore aviation as a teaching tool and career motivator is a great way to ensure a strong future for general aviation.

When you fly a political or business leader, you just may change the attitudes of individuals who are influential but may be poorly informed on aviation matters—such as security, air-

port development, and noise abatement. A first-hand introduction to general aviation for a lawmaker or local opinion leader can produce important benefits for your community.

When you fly an air traffic controller, you will help improve the pilot-controller relationship. Even though controllers talk with pilots all the time, it's surprising how little some of them understand about what goes on in the cockpit.

How do I participate? Where do I find someone to take on a flight?

That's easy. Start with a **friend**. You know people who have expressed an interest in flying with you. Now is the best time to do it. Even better, consider taking a friend who may have learned about general aviation only through accident reports in the news. You may be responsible for launching a brand-new pilot or changing a friend's negative or misinformed impressions of "little airplanes."

When it comes to **reporters**, pick a likely candidate from newspapers, radio stations, and television. A newspaper columnist may be a good choice as they are always looking for interesting new adventures to write about. Keep an eye out for individuals who are covering aviation issues, and make the offer to those people. If no one in particular comes to mind, call the media outlet and make the offer to take a reporter on an orientation flight.



If you have or know school-age children, it's not hard to find a **teacher** to invite for a flight. If not, call or visit the principal of a local school to explain your offer. You could also contact the parent-teacher organization.

If you don't know someone who works in air traffic control, contact your nearest military or civilian tower, Air Route Traffic Control Center, or Flight Service Station, and tell them that you wish to take a **controller** on an orientation flight. Phone numbers for these facilities are listed in AOPA's *Airport Directory* and AOPA Online (www.aopa.org).

Six Steps for an Effective Orientation Flight

#1 Pick the right day. Fly on a pleasant VFR day. No one new to general aviation wants to be bumped around on an ILS approach to minimums. When in doubt about the weather, postpone the flight for a day with more pleasant conditions. Once your guest is ready to join you for a flight, encourage photo taking by suggesting that your guest bring a camera.

#2 Prepare your airplane. Make sure your airplane is clean and tidy and your charts, headsets, and other accessories are neatly stowed. Ensure that the passenger seat is set and locked and seatbelts are neat and ready for passengers. Because your guest will be looking out the windows more than your average passenger – and maybe even shooting photos – take some time to clean the windshield and side windows.



Take a quick flight just before the orientation flight so that you know everything in your airplane is in good working order and that you are sharp and ready to fly. You don't want to be taxiing for takeoff only to discover there's a glitch in the electrical system. Make sure, too, that your paperwork is in order. Ramp checks are becoming more frequent, and you want to be prepared. It's also a good idea to have an air-sick bag inconspicuously available... just in case.

#3 Preflight the airplane with your guest. A thorough preflight helps reinforce the idea that general aviation pilots are constantly committed to safety. Don't just explain *what* you're doing; explain *why* you're doing it. Once seated inside the aircraft, take a few moments to point out instruments such as the attitude indicator, altimeter and



avionics. Tell them that your airplane has all the same instruments as an airliner!

Before you begin the flight, assure your guest that you will cut short the flight if he or she is uncomfortable for any reason.

#4 Tailor your comments for your guest. You will have a more significant impact if you customize your comments for your passenger. For example, if you are flying a **teacher**, you'll want to point out how the study of aviation includes the disciplines of math, science, geography, and history. An **air traffic controller** will likely be more interested in communications with the facility or the effect of ATC procedures on your flying. A **reporter** might be most interested in safety, while a **political leader** might want to know about the positive impacts of the airport on the community. And if you're flying a **friend**, he or she will probably be interested in enjoying the bird's-eye view of your area. If you're not sure of your passenger's interest, just ask. By being open to questions, you will be able to make your guest comfortable and provide appropriate information.

#5 Conduct a sedate, uneventful flight. That's right. Leave the steep turns and stall demonstrations for another day. Most first-time passengers want the flight to be as calm as possible. Point out safety features and briefly describe how the avionics help you navigate precisely. Chances are your guest had no idea such sophisticated equipment is found on smaller aircraft.

Describe airport and traffic pattern procedures. Explain the see-and-avoid concept. If appropriate, let your guest help scan for other aircraft and participate in flight duties as you see fit. **Remember the purpose of the flight: to demonstrate the joy of flying and the safety and utility of general aviation aircraft.**

Encourage questions as cockpit duties permit. Answer them to the best of your ability. If you don't know the answer, say so and get back with the person after the flight.

Always be ready to cut the flight short if your passenger doesn't feel well or seems to not be enjoying the flight.

#6 Follow up with your guest. Give your guest information from AOPA, such as the brochure *What is General Aviation?* or a recent issue of *AOPA Pilot*. Suggest your passenger visit aviation Web sites including AOPA Online (www.aopa.org) and General Aviation: It's Working for America (www.GAservingAmerica.org). Some AOPA members like to

present an AOPA First Flight Certificate or an extra chart with their route displayed as a memento of the occasion. And don't forget to take a picture of your guest with your airplane!

AOPA Member Resources Available for Orientation Flights

Depending on the interest of your guest, you may want to share some of these AOPA brochures at the end of the flight:

- *What is General Aviation?*
- *ABCs of Aviation*
- *It's Your Airport*
- *A Teacher's Guide to Aviation*

These brochures as well as AOPA First Flight Certificates are available at no charge to AOPA members.

You Can Make a Difference

The more people we introduce to general aviation, the more accurate the public's perception becomes. Whether you fly a friend, leader, controller, reporter, or teacher, you will be performing a valuable service for general aviation. Thank you for being part of this important outreach program. Have fun and fly safely!



When you provide a first-hand flying experience to people unfamiliar with general aviation, you can foster understanding, create new pilots, and improve the perception of general aviation. An orientation flight can have a positive impact on local issues affecting your airport and your flying.



For more information, visit:
AOPA Online at
<http://www.aopa.org/info/comres4u.html>

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