



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Advisory Circular

Subject: POSITIVE EXCHANGE OF FLIGHT
CONTROLS PROGRAM

Date: 3/10/95
Initiated by: AFS-631

AC No: 61-115
Change:

1. PURPOSE. This advisory circular provides guidance for all pilots, especially student pilots, flight instructors, and pilot examiners, on the recommended procedure to use for the positive exchange of flight controls between pilots when operating an aircraft.

2. BACKGROUND. Incident/accident statistics indicate a need to place additional emphasis on the procedure for the exchange of control of an aircraft by pilots. Numerous accidents have occurred due to a lack of communication or misunderstanding as to who actually had control of the aircraft, particularly between students and flight instructors. Establishing this procedure during the initial training of students will ensure the formation of a habit pattern that should stay with them throughout their flying careers. They will be more likely to relinquish control willingly and promptly when instructed to do so during flight training.

3. GENERAL. During flight training, there must always be a clear understanding between students and flight instructors of who has control of the aircraft. Prior to flight, a briefing should be conducted that includes the procedure for the exchange of flight controls. A positive three-step process in the exchange of flight controls between pilots is a proven procedure and one that is strongly recommended.

When an instructor is teaching a maneuver to a student, the instructor will normally demonstrate the maneuver first, then have the student follow along on the controls during a demonstration and, finally, the student will perform the maneuver with the instructor following along on the controls. When the flight instructor wishes the student to take control of the aircraft, he/she says to the student, "You have the flight controls." The student acknowledges immediately by saying, "I have the flight controls." The flight instructor again says, "You have the flight controls." During this procedure, a visual check is recommended to see that the other person actually has the flight controls. When returning the controls to the instructor, the student should follow the same procedure the instructor used when giving control to the student. The student should stay on the controls and keep flying the aircraft until the instructor says, "I have the flight controls." There should never be any doubt as to who is flying the aircraft.

Flight instructors should always guard the controls and be prepared to take control of the aircraft. When necessary, the instructor should take the controls and **CALMLY** announce, "I have the flight controls." If an instructor allows a student to remain on the controls, the instructor may not have full and effective control of the aircraft. **ANXIOUS** students can be incredibly strong and usually exhibit reactions inappropriate to the situation. If a recovery is necessary, there is absolutely nothing to be gained by having the student on the controls and having to fight for control of the aircraft.

Pilot examiners should discuss this procedure with all pilot applicants prior to the flight portion of any practical test.

Students should never be allowed to exceed the flight instructor's or pilot examiner's limits. Flight instructors and pilot examiners should not exceed their own ability to perceive a problem, decide upon a course of action, and physically react within their ability to fly the aircraft.

Thomas C. Accardi
Director, Flight Standards Service

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Flight Standards Service
P.O. Box 25082
Oklahoma City, OK 73125-5013

AFS-631

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

PRESORTED FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
FAA
PERMIT NO. G44