

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING **PART 2**

S&G instructing adviser Mike Fox continues to discuss training with ab-initio Malcolm Taylor at Seighford

MALCOLM: Mike, last issue we talked about *ab-initio* training and instructors. As I have progressed, I've begun to plan my own routines before flying and then I discuss them with the instructor as part of my pre-flight briefing. That way the instructor doesn't have to spend too much time deciding what exercises I should do and I can concentrate on the specific tasks that I need to practise. But do you have reservations about pupils planning their own tasks?

MIKE: One of the most challenging things about being an instructor is deciding what to do next and planning how. Most instructors are great at this, but some are not so practised. If a student comes along with a list of exercises they wish to carry out on a flight, it is very tempting as an instructor to say, OK – fine, let's go! But it is the instructor that is in the best position to set the pace and content of training, due to his or her experience, so instructors should always spend time checking that the suggested activities are in the student's best

interests. So I would say that it's helpful, if used with caution. Of course, instructors have the best chance to schedule appropriate training when there is instructor continuity, and not a new instructor every week!

MALCOLM: At my club, each student gets three winch launches per training session, which I find very helpful, especially if a flight lasts only five minutes! I try to use these to have a new task demonstrated by the instructor, I then attempt the exercise myself with prompting, and finally try to do it without prompting. In this way, both I and the instructor know what I'm trying to do. Can you see any problems with this approach?

MIKE: Again, that sounds like a familiar and appropriate approach to training, but perhaps not for every session. Sometimes

it may be preferable to take some time in a motorglider or perhaps take a high aerotow to consolidate some upper air work. If it feels like the flights are always a bit of a rush, it might be a good idea to suggest this to your instructor. Aerotows and motorgliding may look more expensive on paper, but they may well save you money in the long run if it gives you time to get to grips with one aspect of flying or another.

MALCOLM: Sounds like some good hints to go into my training notebook! Now, what's your opinion on cockpit communication? When I'm practising a new task, I prefer to inform the instructor what I'm about to do, so he knows what to expect. For instance, if I'm turning, I'd say: "Turning right, 90 degrees". I know cockpit chat isn't universally popular with instructors, but do you feel it's a distraction?

MIKE: It wouldn't be a distraction to me, but talking sometimes takes away some brain processing power from handling the aircraft, making judgements or scanning appropriately. Remember the old aviation adage of Aviate, Navigate, Communicate. Flying the aircraft always comes first. Second comes pointing it in the right direction, and always last comes talking. You will find that it doesn't take much to shut me up in the air!

MALCOLM: I guess that having access to a gliding simulator would be an excellent way for the student to practise stick and rudder co-ordination, the one thing that I struggled with at the start. It might also be a useful way of attracting new students as well, but a simulator's too expensive for most clubs isn't it?

MIKE: Some clubs have a dedicated simulator cockpit, but to practise the basics of flying a glider, a decent joystick, set of pedals and reasonably fast PC is all the hardware that's needed. I have flown with some young pilots, who have never flown anything but a PC simulator before, and they can fly perfectly well! Lookout and judgement of angles and distances aren't best represented in most simulators. Some of the more expensive,



Malcolm Taylor likes to plan and discuss routines with the instructor as part of his pre-flight briefing



Mike Fox is the BGA Training Standards Manager. He flies an LS4 from Seighford and Pocklington

multi-screen ones (with dedicated rooms) are better at this.

MALCOLM: How important do you think classroom briefing sessions are for student groups and how often should they be held?

MIKE: I realise that this sport is about flying, but structured training (which includes time in the classroom) is the name of the game here. As I have said many times before, if the student doesn't understand precisely what is about to be taught in the air and why it's being taught, everyone wastes their time and money; especially the student! If there are student glider pilots out there who don't understand training sessions and are getting fed up with training, please don't leave the sport. Leave the club instead and go somewhere that teaches you in a structured way. There are some great training clubs out there, and any clubs that don't care about this stuff will soon learn if all their students disappear!

MALCOLM: We've had some excellent classroom sessions at SGC, often when the weather's too bad for flying, and the relaxed atmosphere is good for student-instructor interactions. Needless to say this encourages lots of questions! But what's your view about student training in marginally flyable weather? Isn't it important for the student to get a "feel" for the weather?

MIKE: There will be some days that a pre-solo student won't learn a lot even though other club flying is going on. Rough days may even be a bit scary, even though a competent instructor can perhaps handle the conditions with ease. I think it's up to the student to decide, having discussed with an instructor if they want to experience such conditions. A student may not get much time on the controls though! Of course, the instructor had to experience those conditions him or herself in order to handle them correctly – it's a matter of timing as to when it's appropriate for a student. Discuss it with your local friendly instructor.

MALCOLM: Personally, I try to fly in exacting weather if I'm allowed to. It's made for some interesting cross-wind landings, but I'm slowly getting there! And I think it's actually good for instructor/pupil interactions.

MIKE: Yes, we have been talking a lot about the interaction between instructor and pupil. Instructors are not super-men or wonder-women. There is a well-known rule on the ground – you know the one – anyone,

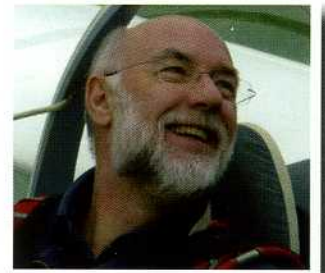
whatever their experience can shout 'stop'. An element of this applies in the air. You can't stop, but if you don't like something, or see something that may be a hazard – mention it to your instructor. You are part of the crew of the glider and, as such, you might as well work with him or her to make the flight safe.

MALCOLM: When I ask friends who know nothing about gliding if they'd like to try it, the response invariably is "Oh no, I couldn't do that, it's too dangerous", or "I'd be too scared". And yet these are often the people who are prepared to take "fun" rides at theme parks! Personally, I find that gliding is the safest sport I've been involved in, and safety is taken very seriously.

MIKE: So, tell us then Malcolm – what are the less safe sports that you have been involved in?

MALCOLM: Well Mike, in my time I played rugby at school, have been a cross-country and track athlete, I rowed at University and played squash. I've injured myself in all of these sports, but thanks to the safety culture of gliding and the care taken by instructors, I've always felt safe.

SOMETIMES IT MAY BE PREFERABLE TO TAKE SOME TIME IN A MOTORGLIDER OR PERHAPS TAKE A HIGH AEROTOW TO CONSOLIDATE SOME UPPER AIR WORK



Malcolm Taylor took up gliding in 2011. He is training at Seighford



■ Derrick Roddie contacted *S&G* after reading the first part of *The process of learning* article (p34, June/July 2012). He said: "I thought it was a shame that Mike can't remember his first flight in a glider. It's a good job then, that I happen to have this photo of the event. The flight was during a Wolds task week in June 1981, when Mike was five years old. Bob Fox is the young chap in the front seat."