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Flight Training Information Pack

Thank you for your recent enquiry regarding flight training with Firecrest. We hope that the information contained in this pack will answer all your questions. However in the mean time you do have any questions then please do not hesitate to contact us on the above number. Or drop in for a chat we are usually open between 9:30 and 18:00 (or sunset) 7 days a week.

The Club

Firecrest is a small friendly club that offers a full range of training courses for the general aviation pilots.

Our highly experienced instructors have been taking students from their first flight through to their Private Pilot Licence (PPL) and beyond since 1984. Some of our students are now professional pilots themselves. With your internationally recognised PPL you will be able to fly your family and friends anywhere in the world.

After gaining your PPL you can go on to train for Night Flying, Radio navigation, Instrument Rating, IMC Rating and Twin Engine Rating.

At Firecrest we have a comfortable clubhouse with briefing rooms, refreshment facilities and extensive flight planning information to hand. The Aero club and restaurant are located close by and offer hot and cold drinks as well as food during the day and evening in pleasant surroundings.

During the year Firecrest arrange trips for club members to destinations within the UK and abroad. It is possible for students to participate in these activities as well as qualified pilots.

The Aircraft

Firecrest has a fleet of Cessna training aircrafts. All these high wing aircrafts are fitted with intercom and basic avionics. These types of aircrafts have been popular for training for the past 20 years and are renowned for their ease of handling and strength. We also have 4 seats aircraft that are available for advance training and touring. The Cessna 172 is a sturdy fully equipped touring aircraft that is an easy conversion from the smaller Cessna 150.

The Airfield

Elstree Aerodrome is owned and operated by Montclare Shipping. Being close to London and the M25, M1, and A41 it is an ideal airfield for learning to fly. The nearest British Rail Station is Elstree and the Aerodrome lies next to the A41 between Edgware and Watford.

Some of the courses offered by Firecrest

Private pilot's Licence (PPL)

45 hours of minimum flight training (not less than 25 hours dual and 10 hours solo), 6 multi-choice written exams, Qualifying cross country flight, Practical Radio Telephony Test and Flying Skills Test on Navigation and General Aircraft Handling.

The flight training for the PPL can be done over a long period if required. Many students have one lesson per week and the course can be expected to be completed in just less than twelve months.

The written exams can be taken any time during the course and in general we find that one evening a week studying for each subject is sufficient to achieve a pass.

The Night Rating

This is an addition to the PPL which extends its privileges so that the pilot can fly after sunset. Pre-requisite for this course is that you should have PPL with 50 hours total flying time. 20 hours of which should have been pilot in command and 10 hours of which must have been gained since applying for PPL.

Course consists of 5 hours flying of which 3 hours is dual instruction at night. 5 hours solo take offs and landings with a night solo cross-country.

Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC Rating)

Pre-requisite for this course is at least 25 hours logged flying time since gaining your PPL, 10 hours of which must have been as pilot in command and 5 hours must have been with cross-country.

Course consists of 15 hours flight instruction, 10 hours of which must be flown by sole reference to instruments, intermediate manoeuvres, instrument approaches and holds. 20 hours ground instruction plus a written examination and flight test.

The First Steps

Try your hands at flying an aircraft with a "Trial Flying Lesson" available as an attractive gift voucher from us.

Standard Lesson

This is a one hour lesson consisting of pre-flight briefing on aircraft controls and instruments in the classroom. Then you will walk to the aircraft and assist with the start-up, taxiing and take-off. The flight will last 30 minutes and during that time you will get a chance to try out controls of the plane. The memorable flight cost only £68.46 and with an additional £15.00 you can even bring a friend to share the experience with you and take photographs.

First PPL Lesson

This lesson last approximately two hours consisting of full pre-flight briefing on aircraft instruments and controls. You will also get briefing on flying manoeuvres and the local training area. The flight will last approximately an hour during which time you will be given controls of the aircraft to get a good feel of your flying experience. After the flight you will be de-briefed on the flight and can discuss any questions you may have about the experience or further training with your instructor. This lesson is available for only £136.91 and you can even bring a friend along for an extra £20.

PPL Requirements

Age

There is no minimum or maximum age limits, but you must be at least 16 years of age before you can fly solo.

Fitness

A medical examination must be passed before flying solo. The examination is similar to an average health insurance medical. Glasses or contacts lenses may be worn and even loss of one eye or colour blindness can be accepted.

Educational Requirements

A certain amount of home study is required as there are 6 ground exams to pass. These are not highly technical and ground school can be provided by our instructors.

The Licence Privileges

It enables you to fly any British registered aircraft anywhere in the world provided it weighs less than 5700kg. Initially this means a single-engine aircraft but multi-engine aircraft can be flown after approximately 6 hours of further training.

Equipment

Some books, a chart and some basic navigational equipment are all that is necessary for the course. Headsets are supplied free of charge during your training and can be hired after qualifying. If required you can purchase one of a wide selection of headsets at competitive prices in addition to other flight equipment from our well stocked shop.

FAQ on NPPL and PPL

NPPL (National Private Pilot's Licence)

The NPPL licence is only valid within the United Kingdom. Permission can be sought from the officials of the destination country to fly abroad. This licence can be obtained by anyone who is fit enough to drive a car and indeed the medical requirements following of those issued by DVLA for car and HGV drivers. Quite frequently PPL holders transfer their medical to that required for NPPL when the CAA medical requirements become too much for them. A UK only licence for those pilots happy to keep their flying within the confines of UK airspace. This licence also has the benefit of more relaxed medical requirements.

Course requirements include:-

1. Minimum of 35 hour flight training (25 of which are with an instructor and the remaining hours as supervised solo including navigation)
2. Medical declaration signed by your own G.P.

PPL (Private Pilot's Licence)

This licence is the first step towards freedom of the sky, whether you are just planning on recreational flying with friends and family, or have your sights set on the Captain's seat of a large jet.

The course consists of 45 hours flight training minimum of which 25 hours dual and 15 hours solo.

As well as 7 x Written examinations must be undertaken on the following:-

1. Aviation Law
 2. Meteorology
 3. Navigation
 4. Technical
 5. Radio Telephony (written)
 6. Human Performance and Limitations
 7. Flight Performance
- and a Flight Test

Night Qualification: A useful fallback when you are running a little late on the return from your booze-cruise to France, and also a requirement for professional licences.

The requirements for the Night qualification are 5 hours of overall night flying, of which at least 3 are under dual instruction, and at least 1 hour of dual night navigation. This training must include 5 take offs and full stop landings at night.

IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions)

This rating will prepare you for the days when the weather is less than fine and teach you the more complex skills of Radio Navigation.

The IMC rating will require a minimum of 15 hours training, 29 hours ground school, one written exam and a flight test.

IR (Instrument Rating)

The other essential rating if you wish to fly professionally, the instrument rating teaches you the skills to fly very accurately in non-visual conditions and enables you to operate internationally in almost all weather conditions.

Multi-Engine Rating

This course enables you to fly complex twin engine aircraft expanding your skills and horizons. This is a short conversion, consisting of 6 hours flying instruction, a written test and a flight test.

Will I get my licence after 45 hours?

The 45 hours flight time is a minimum legal requirement. In reality, the time required to reach the necessary standard varies depending on the abilities of each student. Realistically, most pilots qualify at between 50 to 55 hours.

How often should I fly?

The simple answer is "as often as possible". As the gap between each lesson increases, so does the amount of time required to revise and re-learn skills, so for example, one lesson per week is preferable to a lesson every 6 weeks.

Will I always have the same instructor?

We do our best to ensure that you have the same instructor all the way through your flying training. If your instructor is not going to be available for you, we will always try to let you know in advance (even flying instructors have to have holidays!). As your flying training progresses, it can be beneficial to fly with different instructors occasionally.

What are the advantages of learning in the UK rather than the USA?

On gaining your licence, you will already be familiar with the UK airspace, procedures and weather. However, if you've learnt in the airspace, procedures and climate of another country, it will take time to gain experience of the factors affecting flight in and around the UK. At Firecrest our instructors are always on hand to answer any questions and offer advice.

How much will it cost to learn to fly?

Please see our pricing on training packages and aircraft rental rates.

I'm not very good at maths, is that a problem?

The short answer is no. All the calculations required by a JAR PPL (A) are fairly simple and are well explained in the course books. In addition, the Flight Computer (a sort of "calculator for pilots") does all the difficult work for you.

How often should I study?

As with flying, the simple answer is "as often as possible". In reality, a few hours a week of self study, coupled with theory sessions with your instructor, is sufficient for the average student.

Can I get past exam papers for revision?

There are several excellent publications which provide the student pilot with not only complete sets of typical CAA exam questions, but also detailed explanations of the answers.

What happens if I fail an exam?

First of all, don't worry; even the most gifted of pilots has failed exams! Normally, your instructor will not recommend you for an exam until you are ready for it. If you do fail, your instructor will help you improve your weak spots and then you can re-sit the exam. Each exam can be taken 3 times.

Can I fly in all weathers?

The basic JAR-PPL (A) allows you to fly by day under Visual Flight Rules (VFR), that is, clear of clouds and in sight of the ground. Later in your piloting life, you can take further ratings which will allow you to fly both at night and above the clouds.

Where can I fly?

A JAR PPL is an internationally recognised licence and subject to local rules is usable worldwide. The NPPL is only recognised for flights in UK airspace and by prior arrangement with some other European countries. By 2012 it is anticipated that the NPPL will be replaced by a pan-European licence.

Can I take passengers?

After you have received your JAR-PPL (A) licence, you can take passengers, but you cannot charge them for the flight. However, you can share the cost equally between you.

How expensive is it to hire an aeroplane?

Aeroplane hire charges are from choke-to-choke, which means from the time the aircraft starts to taxi and when it comes to a halt at the end of the flight, so you only pay for choke-to-choke time. For weekends away, only the actual flying time would be charged (subject to a minimum flying time). Our terms and conditions give full details of our current prices and hire conditions.

How fit must I be to learn to fly?

For the JAA PPL a medical must be passed with an authorised Aviation Medical Examiner (a list and further information is available on the CAA website).

For the NPPL the student must complete a medical declaration with his GP.

In both cases the medical certificate must be issued before any solo flight can take place. There is no upper age limit, providing you continue to pass the medical requirements. Spectacles can be worn and many disabilities do not prevent people from flying

When can I fly?

Firecrest Aviation Ltd is usually open seven days a week, 9:30AM to 6:00PM (or Sunset). In the summer, this is often extended into the evening. In winter, opening can be extended to allow night flying training to take place with prior arrangements.

What sort of aircraft can I fly?

You can fly any single engine aeroplane up to 5700Kg. There are many aeroplanes of varying degrees of complexity within this category. As you progress on to each new aircraft or level of complexity, you will require "conversion to type" and "difference training" if necessary.

How difficult is it to fly?

In many ways, flying is similar to driving a car except that you now have up and down in addition to left and right, also, you no longer have a reverse gear (!) so thinking ahead and anticipation become much more important.

The natural world has a greater impact on flying than driving, so you need to have a better understanding of the weather. Navigation is also a bit different (there are no road signs in the sky!) and is a skill which will be acquired as your training progresses. And finally, while driving, you are insulated from the world. However, in an aeroplane you must communicate with Air Traffic Control using the radio.

What can I do after I gain my licence?

The possibilities are almost endless, but here are a few of the things that other members have gone on to: conversion to more complex aeroplanes (including twin engine aeroplanes); take instrument and night ratings; aerobatics; air racing, etc. members regularly go further afield to Scotland, Ireland or even the Continent.

What about safety?

All Firecrest aircraft are certified under the EASA Certificate of airworthiness - the same as a holiday jet. This means that all our aeroplanes are maintained to the highest of professional standards. Our training aircraft are amongst the most reliable and popular light aircraft in the world.

How do I keep current?

To retain your JAR-PPL (A), you must fly at least 12 hours during every two years (including a minimum of one hour with an instructor - to make sure you're 'up to speed'). You must also maintain an up-to-date medical.

