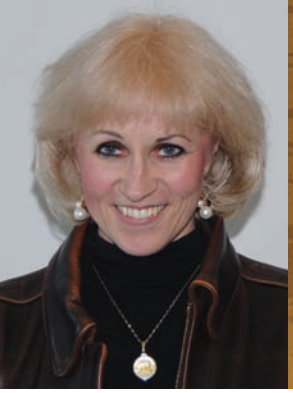

SUSAN PARSON

Postflight

Extending Your Range

Have you ever noticed how pilots seem to think in binary code? We tend to frame our choices in "either/or" terms that are strikingly similar to the zero/one, and off/on terms best known to computer programmers. Think about it for a moment. It may have started when you first visited a flight school to sign up for lessons: High-wing or low-wing? Glass panel or steam gauges? Powered or non-powered? Tricycle or taildragger?

It didn't stop there. At an early point in your aviation education and training, you were exposed to the famous go/no-go dichotomy. Then there is that never-ending aviation debate: Some insist that power controls airspeed and pitch controls altitude; others assert the opposite. Don't worry. I'm not going there, if only because I don't relish fielding all the letters we would get on that subject.

Not Just Ones and Zeros

Just as I teasingly remind my engineer friends that there is an infinite number of fractions between zero and one – not to mention an infinite string of numbers *beyond* them – I like to remind my fellow pilots that the range of available choices is a lot broader than our "either/or" phrasing might suggest. A major goal of this issue is to illustrate that very point.

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I can't think of a single area where an aviation choice appropriate to a given time or circumstance is cast in stone. I started my flight training with a high-wing, two-place Cessna 152, mostly because it was the least expensive trainer in the fleet. Eventually I checked out in a low-wing Piper *Warrior* to accommodate a passenger's preference. I learned to fly instruments on steam gauges, but was among the first to check out in glass when the school's first Garmin G1000 equipped aircraft arrived. Similarly, I learned to fly with the tricycle gear that is, ironically, now more conventional than the so-called "conventional gear" on a tailwheel aircraft. But that didn't mean I couldn't eventually learn to fly such a plane. As I regularly point out in safety seminars, the go/no-go decision is a lot more nuanced than it sounds. Once en route, it becomes a continue/divert decision, with all the possibilities that diversion entails.

A Range of Training Options

A more recent addition to aviation's binary code mode is the puzzling – to me, anyway – debate over the traditional maneuvers-based training (MBT) "versus" scenario-based training (SBT). While it is true that both the FAA and the flight training community have put more emphasis on SBT in recent years, that doesn't mean that instructors or pilots have to choose and use just one training method.

A more flexible and more useful approach is to frame this particular "either/or" in the same purpose-oriented way you would use to decide which airplane to rent. If you are going out to fly solo in the local area, a two-seater is all you need. For a family vacation to the beach, though, you are more likely to look at a four- to six-seat plane with greater range and hauling capacity.

Similarly, it seems to me that the choice of MBT or SBT training methods depends on what you are trying to learn at any given time. If you are trying to master the mysterious art of landing, you are more likely to benefit from a very focused session of that maneuver. For cross-country training, by contrast, a structured scenario-based training session is much more effective in helping you apply and correlate the many moving parts of this particular activity.

General aviation offers an endless array of possibilities for expanding your horizons. So drop the ones and zeros from your thinking, and use all available ways to enjoy the wide world of flying.

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