

7 Reasons an Instrument Rating Will Make You a Better Pilot

by [Sarina Houston](#) 1. November 2014 16:11



Photo: [N. Tackaberry/Flickr-CC BY-ND 2.0](#)

Getting an instrument rating means you'll be able to fly in the clouds and you won't be stuck on the ground as much because of bad weather. But an IFR rating also comes with a few other advantages. Here's why getting an instrument rating will make you a better pilot:

1. **You'll become more accurate.**

There's no doubt that accuracy improves with instrument flight. In order to remain safe while in the clouds, you have to stay on your altitude and heading. Deviations become much more of a safety hazard when you can't see the ground below you or other aircraft flying around you. During your IFR training, you learn to fly more precisely, staying on your assigned altitude, heading and airspeed, or making exact pitch and power changes for, say, a precise 500 foot-per-minute climb. These skills will transfer over to your VFR flying, too.

2. **Your preflight planning will be better.**

Preflight planning is always important, but when you introduce low ceilings and fog into the equation, planning is done with a whole new outlook. IFR flight presents new challenges like icing hazards, holding procedures and traffic delays, and it's more important than ever to be prepared for fuel stops, flight plan deviations and alternates.

3. **You'll learn more about your airplane's instruments and technology in general.**
In-depth familiarization with your aircraft's instruments is one of the challenges of the IFR rating. You'll not only need to know how these instruments work, but you'll become familiar with what to do in case of instrument failure. The extra knowledge of autopilot systems and GPS technology will come in handy for flying in different environments, both VFR and IFR.
4. **You'll always be 'two steps ahead'.**
Any instrument student knows that part of IFR training is transforming your mindset from real-time flying to being at least two steps ahead of the airplane. Being ahead of the airplane is necessary for instrument flight, as there are numerous things going on and you'll need to react quickly. Planning for the next two or three steps will become second-nature to you, and before you know it, you'll be using this mental trick all the time – even for non-aviation tasks!
5. **You'll be more prepared for inadvertent flight into IMC.**
Flying in the clouds is safe when it's predictable, and when on an IFR flight plan. But there are times when you might find yourself in less-than-VFR conditions without intending to be, like at night, when the clouds roll in sooner than predicted, or if it's tough to see the horizon in rain or hazy conditions. An instrument rating will greatly increase your chances of remaining in control of the aircraft should you encounter an inadvertent flight into IMC condition.
6. **You'll be better at finding traffic in the area.**
As a VFR pilot unfamiliar with IFR operations, it's difficult to know where exactly another aircraft is when the pilot reports "localizer inbound" or "on the 7 mile arc." With an instrument rating, you'll finally be aware of the exact locations of all of these other aircraft in the local area, improving your situational awareness and collision avoidance capabilities.
7. **You'll become more skilled at noticing and predicting the weather.**
IFR training gives pilots a really thorough look at weather theory and weather reports. As you gain experience flying in IFR conditions, you'll get much better at recognizing hazardous weather like icing, thunderstorm activity and frontal passages. This proves to be valuable knowledge to have during any flight, of course, and as a bonus you might also become the go-to guy for weather reports and forecasts among your family and friends.

Source: Globalair.com