



Current or Proficient, what's your skill level?

By Rich Carlson

FAR Part 61 clearly states that pilots must be both current and proficient if they are to safely operate a glider. Currency requirements like, 61.56 *Flight Review*, 61.57 *Recent flight experience: Pilot in command*, and 61.69 *Glider towing: Experience and training requirements* typically spell out the minimum amount of flight experience that a pilot needs to exercise the privileges of their pilot certificate. Other regulations like, 61.31(j)(1) *Type rating requirements, additional training, and authorization requirements*, and 61.107 *Flight proficiency* state that the pilot must be proficient in various flight maneuvers. While most pilots are familiar with the currency regulations, they tend to gloss over the proficiency ones. Do you?

Most pilots are familiar with FAR 61.56 *Flight Review* regulation, popularly called the **BFR**. Summarizing paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) this regulation says that every pilot must receive at least 1 hour of ground instruction and 1 hour (or 3 flights in a glider) of flight instruction every 24 calendar months. The ground instruction must cover FAR Part 91 while the flight(s) must cover the maneuvers and procedures that demonstrate the pilot can safely exercise the privileges of their pilot certificate. You should also note that paragraphs (d), (e), (f), (g), and (h) describe alternate methods of compliance for this regulation.

As most instructors will attest, the *Flight Review* is seen as a burden by most pilots. They seem to dread the thought that they will **fail** this review and their pilot certificate will be confiscated. Nothing could be further from the truth. Simply pull out your copy of the FAR's, or go online to the FAA web site [http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/faa_regulations] and read the text for yourself. Nothing in 61.56 says anything about a pass or fail condition. It simply says "satisfactorily completed the review". That's right; it's a review, not a test.

While you can't fail a test, you can fail to demonstrate the proficiency and skills you once possessed. Remember, you did pass a flight test once and you demonstrated the level of proficiency described in the Practical Test Standard (PTS) for your specific pilot certificate. What this means is that you will be required to take more dual flight instruction to get your skills back to their previous high level. Can you do something to improve your *Flight Review* experience?

The answer is an emphatic **YES**. Here are a few ideas from the Soaring Safety Foundation.

- Prepare in advance for your *Flight Review*. Start by sitting down in your home or office and think about your flying over the past 2 years. What haven't you

practiced? Doing a lot of cross-country work, when was the last time you practiced stalls? Flying around locally, when was the last time you practiced slips? We all fall into ruts, and the *Flight Review* is your chance to climb out and look around. Pull out your logbook and the PTS and come up with a short list of maneuvers you want to review.

- Pull out the FAR's and review Part 91 operations. Your instructor will probably ask you about airspace. Need a review, visit the SSF web site [<http://www.soaringsafety.org/presentation/firc.html>] and look at what the instructors are learning.
- Talk to your instructor and schedule the review at least 1 week in advance. This will give the instructor time to prepare. Then show up with the written list of maneuvers you generated and a short list of questions you can discuss with your instructor. No doubt your instructor will revise your list to make sure that there are no gaps in your skills, but you will have a major input into this process.

Now that you've got that 61.56 endorsement in your log book, are you done with all the currency requirements for the next 2 years?

Nope, I hear you saying there's still the 61.57 requirement if you want to carry passengers. You need to log 3 flights in a glider within a 90 day period to meet the 61.57 requirements. OK, are we done now?

Well, yes and no. While there are no additional currency requirements that a glider pilot must comply with, there are proficiency issues. When you were generating that list of maneuvers you wanted to practice again you were thinking about proficiency. The *Flight Review* was a good excuse to get some additional training, but it's not the only one. When was the last time you practiced spin recognition? How about boxing the wake? Or any of the other maneuvers listed in the PTS? When can you get proficiency training? Any time! Simply ask your instructor.

Is there a difference between being current and being proficient? Most people will say yes. Imagine this, you're about to land the glider in a 15 kt crosswind when you notice a large group of your fellow club members standing by the runway watching you. Do you want to be proficient in crosswind landings or will you settle for just being current?

