

FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR DEBRIEF GUIDE

FOR USE AFTER EVERY TRAINING FLIGHT

Combining Human Factors, Military Debriefing Discipline,
and FAA Best Practices

STEP 1: SET THE TONE (PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY + JUST CULTURE)

- ☐ Debrief is planned and expected — part of the job of being a professional pilot
- ☐ Instructor leads and facilitates, but student should be actively engaged
- ☐ Instructor models accountability: “Some things I could have done better as a pilot / instructor today?”
- ☐ Reinforce: Goal is performance improvement, not individual blame. Learn & Grow, NOT blame.
- ☐ Psychological Safety: No permanent record...instruction only for student's learning

STEP 2: EXECUTION REVIEW (TRUTH OVER ASSUMPTIONS)

- ☐ What were the Clearly Defined Objectives (CDO) of the lesson today?
- ☐ What actually happened (truth data: altitudes, airspeeds, inputs, aircraft behavior)?
 - ☐ Flight Planning / Preflight / Brief
 - ☐ Ground Ops and Taxi
 - ☐ Takeoff and Climb
 - ☐ Enroute / Navigation
 - ☐ Area Maneuvers
 - ☐ X/C Procedures
 - ☐ Instrument Procedures
 - ☐ Descent / Arrival / Pattern Ops
 - ☐ Approach / Landing
 - ☐ Ground Ops / Taxi / Shutdown / Secure
- ☐ Identify Debrief Focus Points (DFPs) — critical events to analyze

STEP 3: ANALYSIS (ROOT CAUSE USING HUMAN FACTORS)

- ☐ Identify Root Cause (earliest contributing factor) For each DFP, ask “Why?” - until true root cause emerges.
- ☐ Engage student by asking questions - Perception / Decision / Execution
- ☐ Highlight barriers that failed (planning, checklists, procedures, comms, instruction)

Human Factor	Contributing Human Factors
☐ Perception	Misread cues, late recognition, lack of knowledge or understanding?
☐ Decision-making	Poor judgment, wrong rule applied, airmanship?
☐ Execution	Skill error, checklist missed, CRM issue, distractions?
☐ Situational Awareness (SA)	Tunnel vision, distractions, complacency, cross-check?
☐ Areas of Vulnerability (AOVs)	Known risks not mitigated? Planning?
☐ Workload / Task Saturation	Aviate, Navigate, Communicate priorities
☐ Communication / CRM	Clear, Concise, Correct Communication. Misunderstanding of instruction or CRM comm.
☐ Physical / Psychological	Fatigue, stress, overconfidence, lack of confidence, anxiety

STEP 4: LEARNING & ACTION (WHAT WILL WE DO DIFFERENTLY?)

- ☐ What specific lessons will we apply next time?
- ☐ Recap things the student did well.
- ☐ What are goals or planned objectives for next sortie? (strive for three learning points to focus on next lesson)
- ☐ What's one action commitment from the student?
- ☐ What's one action commitment from the instructor?

BONUS SEAL FRAMEWORK	S Set the Tone: “What could I have done better today?”	E Execution: What actually happened? (Truth Data Results vs Assumptions)
	A Analysis: Why did that happen? Human Factors? Perception - Decision - Execution	L Learning: What will we change next time?