

Should I go flying before an Airline Cadet Interview?

Over the previous years, numerous airline cadet candidates apply with varied amounts of flying experience. Some literally with zero flight hours and some with as much as 50 flight hours. All of which is valuable, but they all ask the same question. “How much flying should I have prior to an interview, and before I start my flying course?”

This answer will certainly vary from person to person, and even airline to airline.

Typical responses can again vary from “we will train you”, to “... the more experience the better”, even in extreme examples such as “why would you waste your time doing any flying beforehand!” All of which are ultimately very subjective responses.

So is there a right or wrong answer to this question?

From my own personal experiences with Cadet Pilot interview preparation and mentoring, let alone seeing the results both during and after cadet courses I feel that previous flying experience is not just an important part of preparation; but almost an essential aspect to be considered.

Typically, zero time cadets may not have had any exposure to flight. Therefore various flying introduction programs are certainly worthwhile. Firstly, to see if you are actually interested in aviation and the flying environment. Secondly, to see if you are suited to a flying role and the challenges that this presents.

Over the previous 2 years most cadets I have worked with complete these programs, certainly as a minimum. Beyond which further training of course, is up to the individual. Various programs can be pursued towards First Solo flight, and then beyond towards a RPL/PPL (Recreational Pilot Licence or Private Pilot Licence) which again is all experience. This certainly does help towards not just the interview process and understanding aviation, but the future role that one is about to pursue as an airline cadet pilot.

From some recent graduates of an Airline Cadet program various comments and feedback was given for future cadet pilots and applicants. It was suggested that prior to any interview, practical aviation exposure and introduction programs was a must. This experience would assist in actual practical knowledge regarding flying rather than just a theoretical approach. Furthermore, prior to commencing a cadet training program further flight training especially in a similar aircraft type would be beneficial towards course proficiency. This further exposure leading towards First Solo or even RPL/PPL programs was up to the individual.

Over the previous 12 months from 12 successful airline cadet applicants only 2 of which had zero flight experience. The further 8 had completed some form of flying exposure programs, and 2 had PPL pilot licences. This experience made all of these applicants more confident and proficient with all aspects of the interview process. As the practical flying had given them that extra edge when compared to other applicants with only a theoretical background.

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