

# IOE? Why Me?

## Why Initial Operating Experience (IOE) Will Improve Your Safety and Enhance Your Jet Flying Experience

by Stan Smith



In my youth I played a lot of tennis. I took lessons to learn proper techniques and I practiced. With time I got to be pretty good. But tennis is a demanding discipline. Practice alone will only improve your game so much. After that you need to practice with better players who challenge your game. Then you need to return to the coach and refine your technique.

Flying is much the same. The difference between being an average pilot and a good pilot is incremental and the dedication and discipline required to improve is not linear. An IOE is a great way to improve the learning curve.

So now, you're moving up in your aviation life. You own or are contemplating buying a sophisticated turbine airplane. You've completed or are about to begin your initial simulator training at FlightSafety International or another similar provider.

Your immediate goal is to train to FAA Practical Test Standards (PTS) and receive that coveted type rating. When complete, you'll fly the simulator confidently with engines ablaze, hydraulics leaking, and electrons straying.

But, are you ready for that seemingly docile real world? The answer may be a confident yes – but is there a smarter and better

way? The answer is a resounding YES!

The airlines and military have realized for years that seasoned pilots still face a learning curve after initial training, and they provide the guidance and training to reach the backside of that learning curve. At the airlines they call it Initial (or Line) Operating Experience (IOE). In the United States Air Force they call it Line Development Missions (LDM). In either case, it is a proven way to safely make the transition from the simulator training environment to real-world operational flying.

The concept is simple. Rather than jump from sim to jet and blast off to learn those lessons the hard way, you fly with an experienced pilot in a “low threat” environment for your initial 25 to 100 hours. But I'm not talking about some pilot that the insurance company has insisted accompany you to “save you from killing yourself.”

I'm talking about an experienced pilot; a pilot who will help you develop proper habit patterns and suggest techniques which complement the structured training you received in the simulator. I'm talking about an experienced pilot with a plan. A plan that will systematically expose you to the new challenges of operating a jet.

“Challenges, what challenges? I heard flying those jets is easier than flying my twin.” This is a common theme I hear and in many ways is true. But there are differences that you need to learn and probably some old habits you need to unlearn.

### Some of the differences (and food for thought):

- High altitude operations and physiological considerations; *(Time of useful consciousness is 7 seconds?)*
- High-density airspace at faster airspeeds; *(“Hold 170 until the marker.”)*
- ATC expectations of the jet operator; *(Is the controller's belief that he/she is talking to two corporate jet pilots or one single-pilot new guy?)*
- Short-field operations; *(Why is the manufacturer's data ambiguous?)*
- Mountain destinations/departures and performance; *(Can I possibly get out of here in the summer?)*

- Fuel planning;  
*(I use more fuel in the descent phase?)*
- Airborne weather radar;  
*(Is that the biggest thunderstorm I ever saw or NYC?)*
- Flight planning;  
*(But they told me this is a 1,200-mile airplane.)*
- Risk assessment;  
*(There is a logical way to evaluate risk.)*
- FMS/GPS/Flight Director/Autopilot Integration and use;  
*(You do have a co-pilot, his name is AUTOMATION.)*
- Ground operations;  
*(Most operators don't seem that concerned until I criticize the other guy who just jetblasted sand on their \$10,000 windscreen.)*
- Maintenance considerations;  
*(Phase inspections?)*
- Minimum Equipment List;  
*(Why do I need one of those and how do I get one?)*
- DRVSM airspace.  
*(It's only a year away!!)*

### Beyond the Sim Ride

Now granted, nothing on this list is brain surgery, but chances are most everything on this list does differ from the way you previously operated. Whether that difference is subtle or dramatic depends on what aircraft you flew previously, how and where you learned to fly, and how you choose to operate that airplane. However, both aspects are critical to safe jet operations.

Simulator training is crucial to any safe flight operation, but by its nature, it is time constrained and syllabus driven. We all struggle to absorb all the information needed to pass the practical standards test at the end. And this (by the way) is the smart way to approach simulator



training, especially if it's your first type ride. Follow the syllabus, listen to your sim instructor and learn what you need to pass the oral and check ride. In the process you will learn the basics. But after the simulator it's show time!

You already have the type rating; now you can relax and let the information sink in. What did I mean earlier when I said the IOE should be "low threat?" An IOE has more flexibility and occurs at real time. It allows you the opportunity to deal with problems and situations as they arise.

Your IOE standards pilot should be a mentor. He or she is there to answer questions and make suggestions. It is a great opportunity to bounce ideas off another pilot who has been in your shoes. It is also a chance to stretch as a pilot while under the watchful guise of a mentor.

"Low threat" however does not mean freewheel it. An IOE cannot be rudderless. It should be documented and have a syllabus of its own.

An IOE syllabus ensures that your mentor pilot exposes you to all the important issues. The sequence of events is best dictated by real world exposure, but items not encountered in the course of normal flying can be programmed or discussed.

For example, the situation will probably not arise where a zero

flap landing would be normally considered, but as a mentor pilot I will select an appropriate leg and ask you to fly a no-flap approach and landing. If ATC will accommodate, I will also request the airspace to accomplish a simulated emergency descent in place of an en route descent.

The IOE syllabus is a checklist for the mentor pilot to ensure you reap as much experience and benefit from the experience as possible. It allows the mentor to introduce, demonstrate and observe as many important events as possible.

The IOE syllabus should also allow your mentor to develop a package that can be presented and explained to your insurance underwriter demonstrating your commitment to safe flying. Remember that you should not expect your mentor to make positive recommendations to any insurance agent or underwriter unless you meet PTS criteria.

One great variation to a standard IOE is to begin prior to simulator training. Fifteen to 20 hours in the airplane prior to simulator training will make that valuable sim time much more productive. A counseling session with your mentor as to how to properly prepare for type training is invaluable.

Finally, let me make a pitch about the intangible benefits of completing an IOE. You will build a relationship with a flying professional, another pilot who loves flying and takes it as seriously as you do. Your mentor pilot should become a resource that you will be able to tap for years to come.

I, by my nature, do not get satisfaction from criticizing people (just for the sake of criticizing) and sometimes struggle to find a diplomatic way to "suggest" an alternative way of accomplishing some task to a client. My greatest compliment with mentoring, however, is from pilots whom I have

mentored that say what they like about the process is being pushed. They get great satisfaction from learning the right way.

Most the pilots I know want to be perfectionist about flying. We gain great satisfaction from doing things correctly. The beauty of that mentality is that when applied to flying, it makes the whole process much easier, safer and more enjoyable.

As you step up to the wonderful world of jet flying make the commitment to doing it right. Obviously there is a dollar amount attached to accomplishing an IOE, but I encourage you to program that cost into your plan of becoming a jet operator. It is a small price to pay for the benefits gained.



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