

About That Rudder...and Sport Pilot Questions

About "The Case of the Rudder"

In Dave Matheny's Lessons Learned column (November 2007), he wrote, "He kicked the rudder to roll wings level..."

While I am not entirely happy with the words "He kicked the rudder," using the rudder to roll wings level is standard procedure for spin prevention and recovery. The Cessna 150 pilot handbook states for spin recovery: "Apply full rudder opposite to the direction of rotation, ailerons should be held in a neutral position throughout the spin and recovery..."

It is a myth that rudder and ailerons should always be used together. In slow flight the ailerons are ineffective and, in some older airplanes, can actually act in reverse and pull the plane into a spin. In these airplanes the rudder must take over the job of leveling the wings.

It is true; the rudder should always be coordinated with the ailerons for banking into the turn. But recovery from the turn is more critical than the turn entry. This is because the plane has more drag in the turn. If the plane is nearly stalled, more rudder than aileron may be prudent to prevent a spin. If a pilot gets in the habit of using rudder coming out of all turns, then the pilot will be more likely to respond with rudder in the case of a spin.

Hope this is helpful,

Bill Berson
Via e-mail

Dave's Response

Mr. Berson seems to have missed the context of the article. The article began with a vignette about supposedly leveling the wings with rudder during a dogfight, as a means to introduce the larger issue of what the rudder is primarily for—to say that it is not there primarily to turn the airplane. Nor would the rudder normally be used to level the wings in a flight regime usually conducted at high speeds and extreme attitudes, when turn coordination is even more important than otherwise.

It's true that in slow flight, approaching the stall, it's often necessary to use rudder to stay straight and prevent a wing from dropping, and in a sense that means keeping the wings level with rudder. But that's a special circumstance, namely very slow flight. And the rudder is not being used to turn the airplane.—Dave Matheny

Maintaining LSA

A question came up at our Vintage club recently. Since many vintage aircraft may be flown with a sport pilot certificate, including Cubs, Champs, Chiefs, Defenders, Taylorcraft, some Ercoupes, and Luscombes, a couple of our members are considering letting their medicals lapse and flying under sport pilot privileges rather than as private pilots.

A question came up about preventive maintenance. Can a former private pilot flying with sport pilot privileges continue to perform preventive maintenance on his/her certificated airplane? Also, if they choose to fly under sport pilot privileges, what if anything do they need to do to notify the FAA of this change of status?

Brad Moore
Via e-mail

The holder of a recreational pilot certificate or higher may perform preventive maintenance on a type-certificated aircraft that he or she owns or operates. The holder of a private pilot certificate or higher may return such aircraft to service. (Note that a recreational pilot may perform the preventive maintenance but cannot return the aircraft to service.) There is no requirement that the person hold a medical certificate to perform the preventive maintenance or return the aircraft to service. The person must simply hold the proper level of pilot certificate and must be the owner or operator of the aircraft. (Reference FAR 43.3 and 43.5, which can be found at www.FAA.gov under the Federal Aviation Regulations link.)

There is nothing a pilot needs to do to switch to sport pilot privileges. You simply allow your medical certificate to expire and begin operating at the sport pilot level using your valid United States issued driver's license in lieu of the medical certificate. You must operate only within the privileges and limitations of the sport pilot certificate when using your driver's license in lieu of the medical certificate.

Joe Norris, EAA Aviation Services

If I build my own aircraft from plans and it fits the experimental LSA category and I certificate it as an E-LSA, can I get my mechanic's ticket for that aircraft without taking the mechanic's training classes?

Doug Humble
Via e-mail

If your aircraft is certificated in the E-LSA category, you will need to take the 16-hour LSA Repairman Inspection course to qualify for the repairman certificate. It doesn't matter if you are the builder or not. You must take and pass the course. This requirement is called out in FAR 65.107.

If you certificate your aircraft in the experimental amateur-built category and you are the primary builder of the aircraft, you may qualify for the repairman certificate without any required training, as called out in FAR 65.104.

You can view the full content of these FARs via the FAA website at www.FAA.gov.

Joe Norris, EAA Aviation Services