

SIX MEN HELP YOU
ACHIEVE YOUR BEST LIFE

it works for me

MY STUFF 61

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my escape

zach braff

Super Fly

A Hollywood funnyman explains how piloting can help you overcome your fears

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
SAM JONES

HIGHER EDUCATION

As of last November, Braff is suited for the skies.

WHERE TO BUY? SEE PAGE 122

Toy guns were forbidden in my house as a child. My father went so far as to kidnap my *CHiPS* action figures and liberate Ponch and Jon's sidearms from their tiny plastic holsters. Subsequent battles were never easy for Ponch, who was forced to engage the California highway system's most sadistic traffic violators with a surrogate weapon: one of Party-All-Night Barbie's black stiletto-heeled pumps. Ironically, despite their exponentially larger destructive capabilities, toy fighter jets were permitted. I'm not sure if it was because the Israeli Air Force was known for being particularly badass,

or because my father and I shared a considerable infatuation with the film *Iron Eagle*. Whatever the rationale, I built dozens of model fighter planes, carefully painting their most minuscule details with all the dexterity my tiny fingers could muster and then flying top-secret sorties into every corner of the house.

Twenty years later, though, I found myself flinching every time a commercial airliner swayed or bumped the slightest amount. My childhood fascination with flying had dissolved into an adult's seemingly rational fear of the unknown. There I was, smudging the cat strollers in the *SkyMall* catalog with my palm sweat during the raft demonstration, clutching my peanuts when the seatbelt sign went *bin eg*, and searching for any glimmer of terror in the toothy smiles of flight attendants trying to serve scalding coffee in rough turbulence. And so, during a particularly horrible patch of travel, I decided I'd take flying lessons. I'd get to know the unknown by unknowing what I had known. Instead of running from my new fear, I'd saunter right up to it and tickle fear's balls with my peace-sign fingers.

I found Mach 1 Aviation in Van Nuys, California, a school that teaches exclusively in state-of-the-art Cirrus SR-20s, which happen to be designed with an added "oh shit" lever that shoots a rocket-propelled parachute out its backside should an emergency arise. At first, you can't fathom that you'll ever be able to comprehend even an eighth of what you'll need to know in order to fly. But little by little, things start to click and appear, like the hidden 3-D image of a unicorn in one of those posters they used to sell in malls. I instantly loved it. (Flying, that is. I never saw the unicorn.)

I earned my pilot's license this past November, and it was one of the coolest moments of my life. It made me want to look at all the other things I fear and learn everything there is to know about them too. I realize now that other sets of fangs will lose their bite once untangled. I realize now that an infinite acreage of things unknown will lose their venom once properly introduced, and you and I will be free to bravely aim our black stilettos into the night and fire. ZACH BRAFF

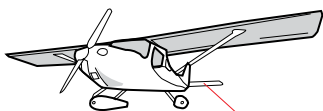
Zach Braff, 33, wrote, directed, and starred in Garden State and plays Dr. John "J.D." Dorian on Scrubs, which is now in its final season. He also has a Grammy.



WING MAN The actor flies a plane made by Cirrus, maker of some of the world's safest planes.

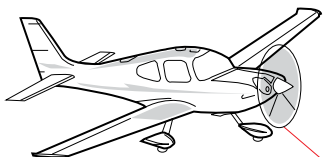
the basics How to get airborne

Flying is a bit more complicated than, say, riding a bike, so aspiring pilots should enroll in a flight school sanctioned by the FAA (find one near you at faa.gov). Here's a breakdown of what it takes—in both time and money—to get your wings, though licensure is ultimately at the instructor's discretion.



SPORT PILOT

This classification, added in 2004, requires about half as much time and money as a private pilot certificate. **Craft:** Any light sport aircraft (LSA). Cessna's 162 SkyCatcher can travel 540 miles and hit 118 knots. **Minimum requirements:** At least 40 hours of piloting, including 15 hours with a certified flight instructor (CFI) and five solo hours **Cost:** About \$4,400 **Resource:** usua.org

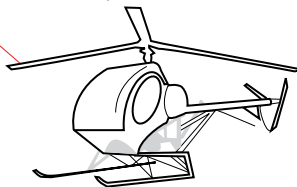


PRIVATE PILOT, GLIDER

Pilots harness rising air currents to keep gliders airborne after the tow. **Craft:** Usually a single seat and a 50-foot wingspan **Minimum requirements:** Student certificate; solo flight endorsement and two solo hours; an additional 10 hours of flight, which must include at least 20 total flights; FAA exams **Cost:** \$3,000 to \$5,000 **Resource:** ssa.org

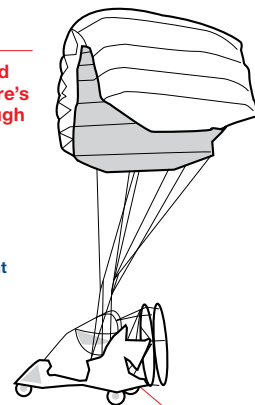
PRIVATE PILOT, ROTORCRAFT

In short, you'll need this if you want to fly a helicopter. **Craft:** Helicopters! Autogyros! Gyrodynes! **Minimum requirements:** Student certificate; 40 hours of piloting, including 20 hours with a CFI and 10 solo hours (fewer hours are needed if you have a private pilot certificate); additional fine print; FAA exams **Cost:** About \$20,000 **Resource:** rotor.com



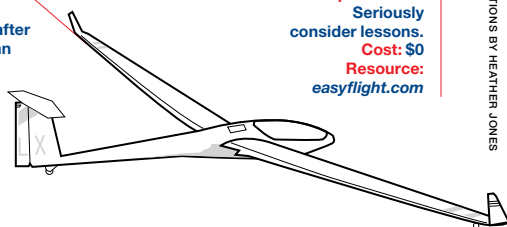
PRIVATE PILOT

The most popular license. **Craft:** Anything classified as ASEL (airplane, single-engine, land), such as the Cirrus SR-20. You can also pursue ratings for floatplanes, jets, and so on. **Minimum requirements:** Student certificate; 40 hours of piloting, including 20 hours with a CFI and 10 solo hours; additional fine print; FAA exams **Cost:** About \$10,000 **Resource:** aopa.org



POWERED PARACHUTE

Technically, you don't need any certification to fly one of these bad boys, as long as it meets specific weight, speed, and fuel-capacity requirements. **Craft:** A seat, a parachute, and a 50-horsepower engine. You'll travel at an altitude of 1,500 feet at 35 miles per hour. **Minimum requirements:** Seriously consider lessons. **Cost:** \$0 **Resource:** easyflight.com



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HEATHER JONES