

# Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9)

## Chapter 2: Human Behavior

### Introduction

Derek's learner, Jason, is very smart and able to retain a lot of information, but has a tendency to rush through the less exciting material and shows interest and attentiveness only when performing tasks that he finds to be interesting. This concerns Derek because he is worried that Jason will overlook many important details and rush through procedures. For a homework assignment Jason was told to take a very thorough look at Preflight Procedures and that for his next flight lesson they would discuss each step in detail. As Derek predicted, Jason found this assignment to be boring and was not prepared. Derek knows that Jason is a "thrill seeker" as he talks about his business, which is a wilderness adventure company. Derek wants to find a way to keep Jason focused and help him find excitement in all areas of learning so that he will understand the complex art of flying and aircraft safety.

Learning is the acquisition of knowledge or understanding of a subject or skill through education, experience, practice, or study. This chapter discusses behavior and how it affects the learning process. An instructor seeks to understand why people act the way they do and how people learn. An effective instructor uses knowledge of human behavior, basic human needs, the defense mechanisms humans use that prevent learning, and how adults learn in order to organize and conduct productive learning activities.

### Definitions of Human Behavior

The study of human behavior is an attempt to explain how and why humans function the way they do. A complex topic, human behavior is a product both of innate human nature and of individual experience and environment. Definitions of human behavior abound, depending on the field of study. In the scientific world, human behavior is seen as the product of factors that cause people to act in predictable ways.

For example, speaking in public is very high on the list of fears many people have. While no two people react the same to any given fear, fear itself does trigger certain innate responses such as an increase in breathing rate. How a person handles that fear is a product of individual experiences. The person who has never spoken in public may be unable to fulfill the obligation. Another person, knowing his or her job requires public speaking, may choose to take a class on public speaking to learn how to cope with the fear.

Human behavior is also defined as the result of attempts to satisfy certain needs. These needs may be simple to understand and easy to identify, such as the need for food and water. They also may be complex, such as the need for respect and acceptance. A working knowledge of human behavior can help an instructor better understand a learner. It is also helpful to remember that to a large extent thoughts, feelings, and behavior are shared by all men or women, despite seemingly large cultural differences. For example, fear causes humans to either fight or flee. In the public speaking example above, one person may "flee" by not fulfilling the obligation. The other person may "fight" by learning techniques to deal with fear.

Another definition of human behavior focuses on the typical life course of humans. This approach emphasizes human development or the successive phases of growth in which human behavior is characterized by a distinct set of physical, physiological, and behavioral features. The thoughts, feelings, and behavior of an infant differ radically from those of a teen. Research shows that as an individual matures, his or her mode of action moves from dependency to self-direction. Therefore, the age of the learner impacts how the instructor designs the curriculum. Since the average age of a learner can vary, the instructor needs to offer a curriculum that addresses the varying learner tendency to self-direct. *[Figure 2-1]*

By observing human behavior, an instructor can gain the knowledge needed to better understand him or herself as an instructor as well as the learning needs of learners. Understanding human behavior leads to successful instruction.

### Instructor and Learner Relationship

How does personality type testing affect instructors and learners? Research has led many educational psychologists to feel that based on personality type, everyone also has an individual style of learning. In this theory, working with that style, rather than against it, benefits both instructor and learner. Although controversy often swirls around the educational benefits of teaching learners according to personality types, it has gained a large following and been implemented at many levels of education. Today's learner can visit any number of websites, take a personality test, and discover what type of learner he or she is and how best to study.

In a continuing quest to figure out why humans do what they do, the mother-daughter team of Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers pioneered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test in 1962. The MBTI was based on Jungian theory, previous research into personality traits, and lengthy personal observations of human behavior by Myers and Briggs. They believed that much seemingly random variation in human behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the ways individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment.