

- Explain that the key to acquiring and improving any skill is continued practice.
- Monitor learner practice of skills and provide immediate feedback.
- Avoid conversation and other distractions when learners are practicing individual skills.
- Explain that learning plateaus are common and that continued practice leads to continued improvement.

Putting It All Together

Many skills are taught before a learner can fly an airplane or a maintenance learner can rebuild an aircraft engine. Just as practicing scales is a fundamental part of learning to play the piano, the learner does not “make music” until the ability to combine the notes in a variety of ways is acquired. For the learner pilot or technician, practicing specific skills is essential, but flying a cross-country trip or repairing a collapsed landing gear requires “putting it all together” in the right way to achieve success.

The following section looks at the challenge of learning to perform several tasks at once, dealing with distractions and interruptions, overcoming problems with fixation and inattention. It also describes the benefits of using realistic training scenarios to develop these abilities.

The Multitasking Mistake

The term multitasking is often taken for granted to mean handling several tasks at the same time. For example, when a pilot is on approach for a landing it is easy to assume that the experienced pilot is performing tasks in concurrence such as ATC communications, scanning instrumentation, and adjusting for minor deviations through the flight controls. We assume that, due to experience and practiced refinement, such skills at some point become automatic and somewhat instinctive. This belief can lead to a false sense of confidence that the routine procedure at hand is *only* routine and therefore does not require the added attention to question one's assumption that there will be no deviation in that task. [Figure 3-20]



Figure 3-20. A pilot is required to perform several tasks at once during approaches and landings.

Priorities of Task Management

It is generally impossible to look at two different things at the same time. The area of focused vision (called the fovea) is only a few degrees in span and can only be directed to one location at a time. Similarly, people cannot listen to two conversations at the same time. While both conversations fall upon the ears at once, people need to devote their attention to the comprehension of one, to the exclusion of the other.