



GETTING STARTED

**FROM WIND-UP AIRPLANES TO MODEL
ROCKETS, FLYING THINGS HAVE ALWAYS
BEEN YOUR FASCINATION.**

WITH DRONES



From wind-up airplanes to model rockets, flying things have always been your fascination. And, with the recent flood of inexpensive, easy-to-fly drones, you find yourself seriously considering a career change-or at the least-a side job in drones. Originally, drone pilots were required to have a Private Pilot's license to fly, but today, things are much simpler. With the availability of low-cost, high-quality drones, becoming a Commercial Drone Pilot has never been easier. But, before making that jump, here are five things you'll need to keep in mind.

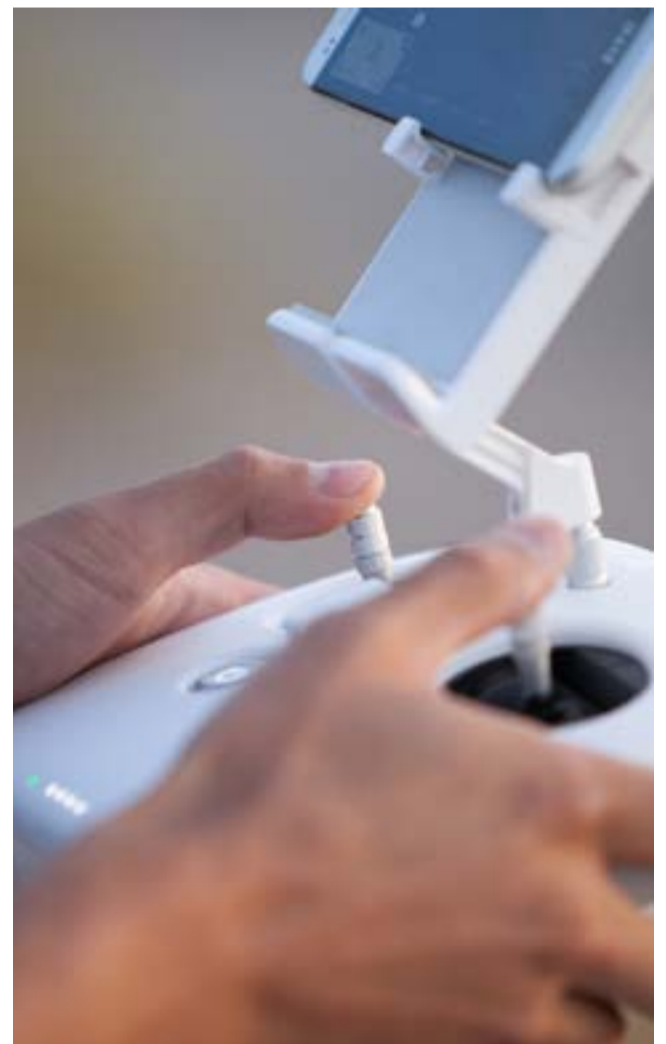




YOUR CLIENT DOESN'T CARE THAT YOU COULDN'T GET THE SHOT AFTER YOU CLIPPED THAT TREE.

1. You'll need a license.

Anytime you are benefitting from your flights (not just monetarily), you are considered a Commercial Pilot and you'll need what's called a "Part 107" Remote Pilot Certificate. The FAA exam covers everything from airspace rules and regs to aviation maps and weather forecasts. There's plenty of free prep material on the FAA website (FAA.gov) along with practice exams and helpful tips. In addition, the internet is littered with lots of test-prep providers who'll more than happily take your cash to help you prepare. Just be sure to check references and ask for a guarantee.



**FLY IT AT SIMILAR LOCATIONS AND
UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS YOU'LL
BE FLYING FOR CUSTOMERS.**

— LOVE ME SOME DRONES!

**YOU SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST
\$1MILLION IN LIABILITY.**

2. You will need insurance.

If you're only flying for yourself (for instance, to support your real estate business), you'll have to judge how much risk you can tolerate. If, on the other hand, you are working for others as a drone service provider, you should have at least \$1million in liability. If you end up working construction or other high-risk environments, you'll probably need more. Expect to pay between \$750 and \$1200 a year for basic liability insurance for low-time drone pilots. If you're already a part 61 (Private) Pilot, you can probably expect to pay less from the start. There are "on-demand" options, but many clients don't accept this-they want a certificate of insurance with their company named. Besides, a yearly policy is cheaper in the long run.





BUY A USED ONE TO START

3. You will need two drones.

Your client doesn't care that you couldn't get the shot after you clipped that tree. (Trust me, you will). You'll need your primary and a back-up. The two drones should be the same make and model allowing your batteries and accessories to fit on both aircraft. To find the right drone for you, look at what you're trying to accomplish and work backwards from there. A business focused on construction mapping and progress imaging might call for a different aircraft than one for high-end aerial cinematography. Consider drone specs & company reliability. Talk to other owners. Buy a used one to start, but make sure its flight properties are close enough to the one you want to end up with. Fly it at similar locations and under the same conditions you'll be flying for customers.



GET A GOOD CASE; PREFERABLY ONE WITH WHEELS.

4. Accessories are necessities.

Get a good case; preferably one with wheels. Make sure it holds all your batteries and screens and most of your main accessories. Splurge for water-tight. While you probably won't be flying in the rain, you might be wheeling it through puddles. Next on your accessory list is batteries-as many extras that you can afford. I have 10. Your drone's only as good as the battery keeping it in the air, so don't use knock-offs. Buy original batteries from the manufacturer or dealer. And last, but not least-don't forget the filters. Your go-to kit should have ND 4, 8 and 16 with a polarizer built in. This is important because video laws dictate that your shutter speed be twice your frame rate. If it's not, your video will look choppy. The easiest way to do this in extreme light conditions (translate: summer sunlight and winter snow) is to use an ND.





PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.



5. Finally, find a mentor or a pal.

Experienced pilots need Visual Observers, make yourself available. You'll make yourself a trusted resource and when your experienced pilot mentor needs a back-up, you're likely to get the call. At the very least, find a fellow beginner to work and grow with. Share your experiences and watch each other's backs.

Now that you've got your gear, practice, practice, practice. Fly every day if you can. Learn from different conditions and environments and then share what you learn. Become a thought leader. Reach out on social media and become part of the community. Before you know it, you'll have a new pilot asking to be your Visual Observer.

