

When is your student ready to solo?

From “[Flight Instructor’s Training Manual](#)” at RealCFI.COM

After they have met the training standards as required in 61.87, the student demonstrates:

Consistency in take-off and landing over different training sessions. If you are using touch and goes or other “Block Practice”, be wary as this can fool you into thinking the students highly perishable “Muscle Memory” is a longer lasting skill. Make sure to use **random practice** where landings are mixed with other maneuvers.

Cognitive understanding of common landing errors and how to correct them. We don’t need students to be perfect, but they should know what the mistakes are and how to correct them. You can only evaluate their understanding with **collaborative assessment**. The CFI has to allow the student to make mistakes (no coaching) and during the debrief ask the student to reflect and replay the pattern and landing sequence to see if they can correctly identify the error, what caused it and how to correct it.

Psychomotor skills and ADM of how to respond to common errors. This requires the CFI to observe recoveries from bounce, porpoise, floating, balloon and when to execute go around CFI may need to “induce” these errors in a safe manner to be confident they can respond appropriately. We are not as concerned with great landings; we are looking for safe landings and more importantly if the student can recognize trouble and get out of it safely.

Take off and landing is in the **automatic phase of skill acquisition**. If it takes the students’ full attention to get the aircraft safely on the ground, then they have no bandwidth to deal with variations and unexpected events. If they can make radio calls comfortably and deal with other minor distractions (CFI introduced) in the pattern and on final approach, then they probably are close to the automatic phase of skill acquisition. Finally, landing on centerline consistently is also a good indicator of automaticity of the skill. Landing on centerline is low priority for students learning to land as they are more worried about crashing. Only when the landing sequence is automatic do they have enough band width to think about landing on centerline.