BEGINNERS INFORMATION FOR RADIO CONTROL PLANES

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This information should be helpful for those just starting in the hobby of Radio Control (RC) flying. A visit to our flying site and conversation with experienced pilots will also be helpful.

START WITH A TRAINER. YOU CANNOT LEARN TO FLY WITH A P 51.

Choice of Plane.

The two basic choices are size and whether an ARF (almost ready to fly) or a stick built (a box of wood and accessories) is best. For most beginners the building skills aren't developed and building time as well as tools and equipment are a factor. This leads most newcomers to elect the ARF. Also, there isn't much difference in cost because kits don't come with the $20 worth of covering material which is needed. The stick built planes are usually a little lighter.

Size is often a matter of bucks. Bigger is better, but the plane and the engine will each cost more. Trainers mostly come in either 40 or 60 size. The numbers refer to the engine displacement (0.40 or 0.60 cu. in.). A number of people use 0.46 and 0.61 engines to have a little more performance as well as an engine that provides for better upgrading after the flying skills are developed and a higher performance plane is desired.

One of the critical factors in selecting an ARF is how the two wing halves are joined. One type has a metal tube which is inserted into each wing half and is rather fool proof, but only comes in a forty size. Most use a laminated plywood carry through (the aeronautical term for a wing joiner). These must be slathered with epoxy to be strong and a joint covering of fiberglass and epoxy is recommended.

Covering material is of some consideration. Some coverings can only be repaired with plastic tape while others can be repaired with one of the mylars which are available in many colors.

Electric powered planes can be great fun, but only after one has learned to fly. The reason is that to learn to land it is necessary to practice approaches to a landing and most electric powered planes simply can't co this.

Engines

In addition to the sizes mentioned above, some features merit careful consideration. The two major factors are pistons and bearings. For engines in the 40 to 60 size range, ABC (aluminum, bronze, chrome) cylinders give more power and a quicker “break in”. They cost a little more than a ringed piston engine and seem a bit easier to tune.

Bearings are a significant consideration. The choices are a sleeve bearing (bushing) or ball bearings. Obviously ball bearings are better; they last longer and have a lower friction.

Most ABC engines have ball bearings and last longer.

The OS brand FX series have a proven record and the needle valve (fuel adjustment) is away from the prop. Many other engines are more than acceptable.

Radio

You will need a Radio to fly. A Futaba FM is strongly recommended because we have buddy boxes (in essence a dual control system that saves many planes) for these radios. Some other radios are compatible with Futaba: check it out. At least four channels are needed and 6 or more channels allow for growth in the hobby. Some of the better radios have features that allow for adjustment of control throws, exponential control movements (softer movement near the center position), but like everything else more features, more dollars. Four servos are needed for the plane and will come with most radios, but buy another if only three are provided.

Accessories

At a minimum, fuel and some sort of pump, a glow driver (ignites the glow plug for starting) and a chicken stick (keeps the fingers out of the prop when starting the engine. Very nice to have is an electric starter which will require a 12 volt battery, and a starter big enough for 60 is recommended regardless of your engine. At the field, stands, tackle boxes, and various ground support equipment will be seen.