

Missouri Career Mentor video transcript



Capt. Bill Slater

Airline Pilot

Hi, I'm Bill Slater. I am a 757 pilot for a major airline. My travels include both domestic travel. I fly off the west coast to Hawaii and also internationally going to all parts of the world. We go down to Australia to the Middle East, Far East, and to Europe.

Joys & Challenges

The aviation industry is a very interesting business. You get the opportunity to meet many people in very challenging times. Different cultures and experiences can be based throughout your travel.

Early Interests

My interest in aviation started basically when I was about seven years old, and my father took me up in a light airplane and we went from Indiana to Illinois.

I thought aviation might be a job for me, so I went over to the local ROTC department and they happened to be at the time looking for pilots. From there, upon graduation I went to Air Force pilot training, which was a one-year program. And from there, I went to a specialty program and specialized for six months in the aircraft that I was going to be rated in. Through my Air Force career, I flew three types of aircraft, and it prepared me well for my commercial career. Upon retirement from the Air Force after 20 years, I was able to get into commercial aviation.

High School Classes

Classes that helped me throughout my educational experience would have to include math. Obviously, in the aviation business, math is going to be involved a lot. Geography – certainly as much as I travel around the world, it's interesting to be able to understand the places that you're going to prior to getting there. It's very helpful in communicating with people. And finally another important thing would be language. There's always a language barrier there. English is the universal language, however, in many places that we go English is not the spoken language. So it is very helpful if you pay attention in your language classes.

In Retrospect

In looking back if there were something I might have been able to do different in high school, I was really pretty happy with my career. I focused in high school on continuing my education into college, which is important in the aviation industry. My team sports that I played, both football and golf, were very important to my career. It gave me the ability to work with people and resolve issues.

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Advice

For you students that are interested in a career in aviation, it is very important to take full advantage of your educational opportunities. There's a time to work and a time to play, and certainly to work in aviation, it is important to be good at both.

If you have a chance during your summer time, maybe go to your local airport and maybe try to pick up a job with the local aviation department. Those are all things that can help you build experience and time before you actually get into the field of aviation.

There is a thing, you know, if someone is really interested in aviation a way to do it – plus if they're interested in the military – there are avenues to do that. Important things are Boy Scouts – Eagle Scout ratings will get you in the Air Force Academy in a heartbeat, as well as senior ratings with civil air patrol can get you in the flying business.

For you ladies out there that are interested in an aviation career, there are certainly a lot of opportunities. I have flown with several female pilots and they are excellent in their field.

If there's anything I could offer to you in a career of aviation, it would be to try to determine early in your career what you like to do. There are two basic tracks to get into the aviation industry. One of which would be to do the military route, possibly go through ROTC or just join the Air Force once you graduate from college. Another route would be upon graduation from college to seek out a civil aviation school that will give you all the type-ratings required to get into aviation. This is a little more expensive method for doing it, whereas if you join the Air Force, the Air Force is going to pay you to do it as a profession and also provide you with millions of dollars worth of training.

Memorable Moment

I guess my prized moment in aviation would be the day that I graduated from Air Force pilot training. It was one year of intense training, and upon completion of that to be actually awarded our wings and put them on our chest was a very memorable experience that throughout my aviation career I'll never forget.