

AIRLINE PILOT CENTRAL

The Pilot Personality



Pilots are a distinct segment of the general population. In addition to flying skills, pilots are selected for their personalities and for a distinct "pilot persona." These characteristics make them safer pilots.

Pilots tend to be **physically and mentally healthy**. Pilots tend to be **"reality based,"** because by the very nature of their work they are constantly testing reality. There are those, however who would dispute this claim.

Pilots tend to be self-sufficient and may have difficulty functioning in team situations without CRM and other training. They have difficulty trusting anyone to do the job as well as they can. Pilots tend to be **suspicious, even a little paranoid**. In moderation, this quality serves them well within their environment and is, in fact, a quality that managements look for in the pilot personality. Outside the cockpit, this quality shows up in the tendency of many pilots to set two or three alarm clocks-- even though he or she may generally wake up before any of the pilots go off. **The suspicious/paranoid tendency also affects the way pilots function in their private lives, as well.**

Pilots tend to be intelligent but are typically **not intellectually oriented**. They like **"toys"**-- boats, cars, motorcycles, big watches, etc. They are good at taking things apart, if not putting them back together. Pilots are **concrete, practical, linear thinkers rather than abstract, philosophical, or theoretical**. On a scale that ranges from analytically oriented to emotionally oriented, pilots tend to be toward the analytical end. They are **extremely reality- and goal-oriented**. They like lists showing concrete problems, not talking about them. This goal orientation tends towards the **short term as opposed to the long term**. Pilots are **bimodal: on/off, black/white, good/bad, safe/unsafe, regulations/non-regulations**.

Pilots are **inclined to modify their environment rather than their own behavior**. Pilots **need excitement**; a 9-to-5 job would drive most pilots to distraction. Pilots are **competitive**, being driven by a **need to achieve**, and **don't handle failure particularly well**. Pilots have a **low tolerance for personal imperfection**, and **long memories of perceived injustices**.

Pilots tend to be scanners, **drawing conclusions rapidly** about situational facts. Pilots scan people as if they were instruments; they **draw conclusions at a glance** rather than relying on long and emotion-laden conversations.

Pilots avoid introspection and have **difficulty revealing, expressing, or even recognizing their feelings**. When they do experience **unwanted feelings**, they **tend to mask them, sometimes with humor or even anger**. **Being unemotional** helps pilots deal with crises, but can make them insensitive toward the feelings of others. **The spouses and children of pilots frequently complain that the pilot has difficulty expressing complex human emotions toward them.**

This emotional "block" can create difficulty communicating. How many incidents or accidents have occurred due to poor communications? The vast majority of Professional Standards cases will be caused by poor communication.