

Product review

By Nick Heard and Sam Spurdens

Ground Study course

Transair-Oxford Aviation PPL Training Multimedia Ground Study Package.

£249.95.

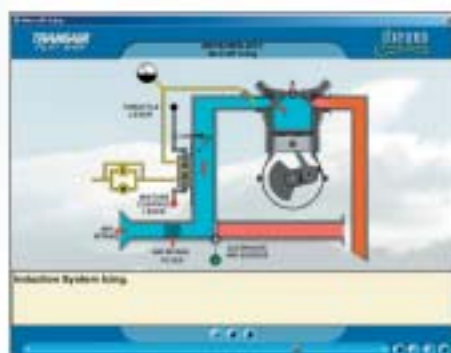
THERE'S NO DOUBT that for many PPL students the worst part of the course is groundschool. Those six exams seem totally at odds with the exciting part—flying—and a large number of would-be pilots give up when faced with the textbooks. So it's very good news indeed when a new product comes along with the potential to make groundschool easier, possibly even enjoyable. It took Oxford Air Training and Transair Pilot Shop, two of the most respected names in General Aviation, two and a half years to develop this computer based training for PPL groundschool study and it's the first product

of its kind.

It comprises six CD-ROMs which fit into the standard CD tray of most modern PCs, and the user can then work his or her way through the six subjects: Air Law & Operational Procedures, Human Performance & Limitations, Navigation & Radio Aids, Meteorology, Aircraft General & Principles of Flight, and Flight Performance & Planning. The set covers the entire syllabus for the JAA PPL and UK NPPL flight training courses. For this review, Pilot asked a flying instructor and a PPL student to comment upon the CDs, since these are the most likely users. The instructor is Nick Heard, also a long haul pilot for Cathay Pacific, and his student is Sam Spurdens who just happens to be Pilot's marketing manager. They fly from Old Buckenham.—Editor

Nick Heard: I HAD USED computer-based training systems (CBT) on a number of airline courses and knew where their limitations lay. As an instructor, I looked forward to seeing how the Transair-Oxford CD-ROM course would compare with airline CBT. The presentation of the six CDs, in an attractive and sturdy leather case, gives a favourable impression. No manual is required; the CDs load automatically with instructions on-screen. Throughout the course, my four-year-old PC (Pentium III 450 MHz/256 RAM, with Windows 98) copes easily. Navigation is straightforward, although a 'replay current page' button would be useful (you have to go back to the previous page and then restart the desired page).

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Screen dumps show the versatility of computer based training that is able to employ video, still-with-voiceover, interactive and diagrammatic communication. Our instructor-reviewer thought Meteorology took most advantage of the new medium, Air Law, least.

The power of computer based training and multimedia is best shown on the excellent Meteorology disc. Full use is made of lots of interactive information, and the explanations are super. Stability is particularly well described, with opportunities to 'drag' parcels of air up and down in stable and unstable conditions to

