



An Aviator's Field Guide to the **Pilot Career Path**

A flight training roadmap taking you
from student to professional

Jason Blair

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In Figure 2, a most recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics we see this remains strong and continues to improve.⁴

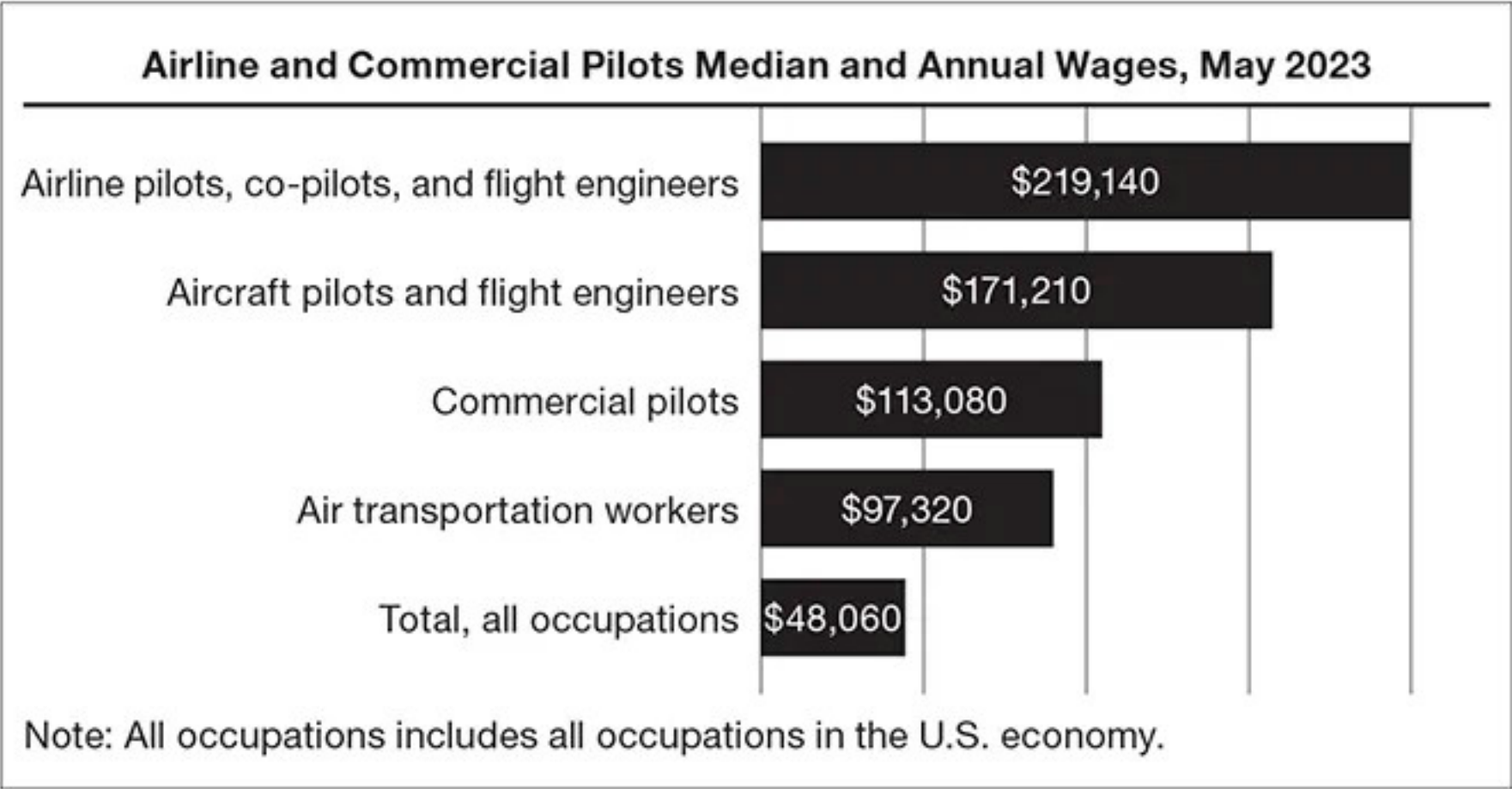


Figure 2. U.S. airline pilots earn some of the highest wages in the nation. (source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics)

Considering recent increases in pilot pay, the return on investment for pilot career paths is better than that for other job areas. Some estimates of the returns on investment for various careers are shown in Figure 3.

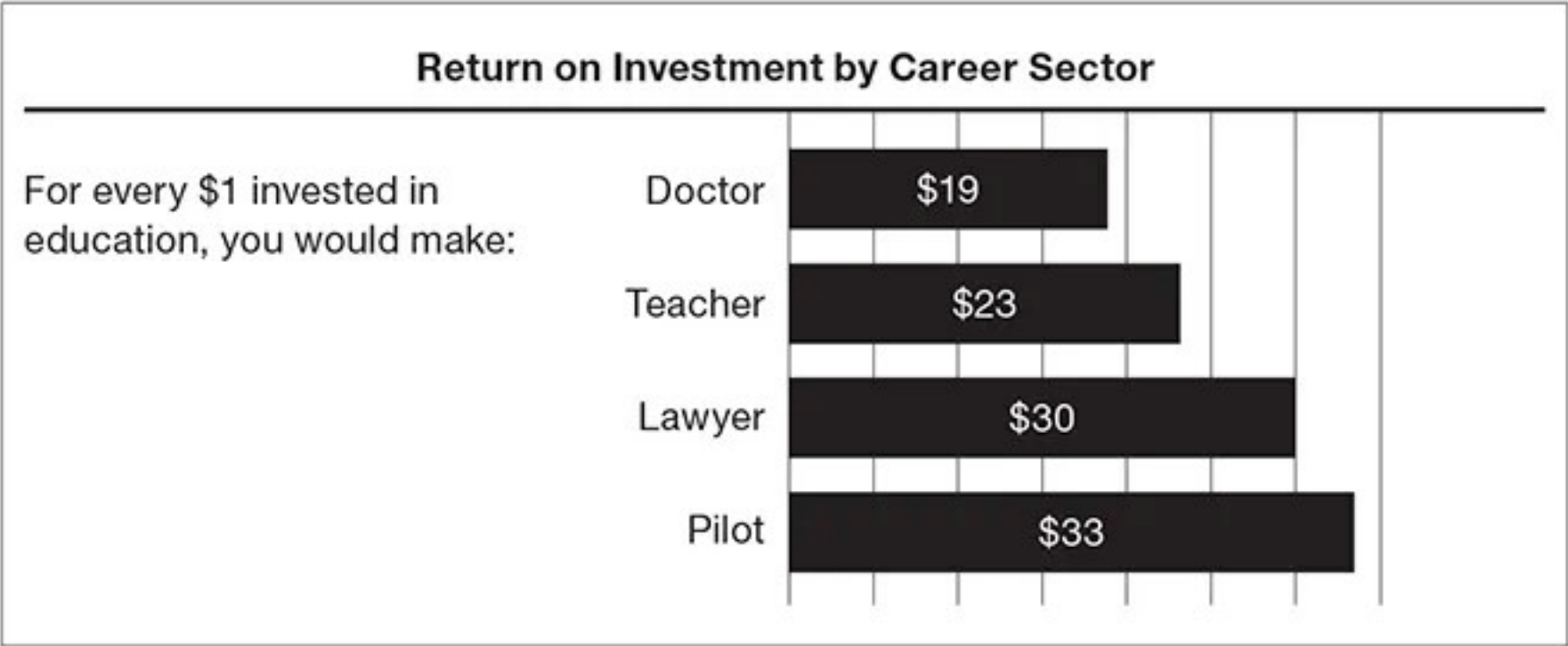


Figure 3. Return on investment for pilot career as compared with other occupations. (source: University of Dubuque)

4. Occupational Outlook Handbook, Airline and Commercial Pilots: Pay. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Private Pilot Training Costs			
	Hours	Costs per Hour	Item Cost
Aircraft time	65	\$200	\$13,000
Instructor time	97.5	\$75	\$7,312.50
Books			\$500
Charts subscription			\$250
FAA Knowledge Test			\$175
FAA Practical Test			\$1,000
Total cost			\$22,237.50

Figure 9. Estimated costs to obtain a Private Pilot Certificate (note that FAA minimums are not used here, because the average student will not complete training within those minimums).

The instrument rating is typically next.

Instrument Rating

After obtaining a Private Pilot Certificate, aspiring professional pilots typically pursue an Instrument Rating (IR), which enables them to fly under instrument meteorological conditions (IMC).

Playing the same math game, we find again there is aircraft and instructor time and costs for books and testing that go into the mix. Most instrument pilots get their instrument rating completed with pretty close to FAA minimum experience requirements (typically 40 hours of instrument training). This makes the costs for obtaining an Instrument Rating under the assumed conditions look something like those shown in Figure 10.

Instrument Rating Training Costs			
	Hours	Costs per Hour	Item Cost
Aircraft time	45	\$200	\$9,000
Instructor time	67.5	\$75	\$5,062.50
Books			\$500
FAA Knowledge Test			\$175
FAA Practical Test			\$1,000
Total cost			\$15,737.50

Figure 10. The Instrument Rating trains a pilot to fly safely and legally in instrument meteorological conditions and is a requirement for almost all types of commercial flying.

Have you dreamed of flying professionally since you were old enough to spy a jet crossing the sky? The path to a pilot career can be rigorous and expensive, but fortunately, you have a knowledgeable advisor to help you get started and keep you on the right track. Aviation writer, instructor, and FAA Designated Pilot Examiner Jason Blair brings his familiarity with the training environment, his understanding of airline hiring practices, and many specific details of the training process to *An Aviator's Field Guide to the Pilot Career Path*.

Learn about financing your training, medical concerns and questions, how parents can best help their children pursue the path, how to choose the best training provider, and how to be most efficient in training efforts. *Pilot Career Path* is a roadmap for pilots (or parents of pilots) seeking to understand the path from starting pilot training to being eligible to be a professional pilot in an airline, charter or corporate operator, or any number of other jobs.

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