



Budget Buys: Cessna 150/152

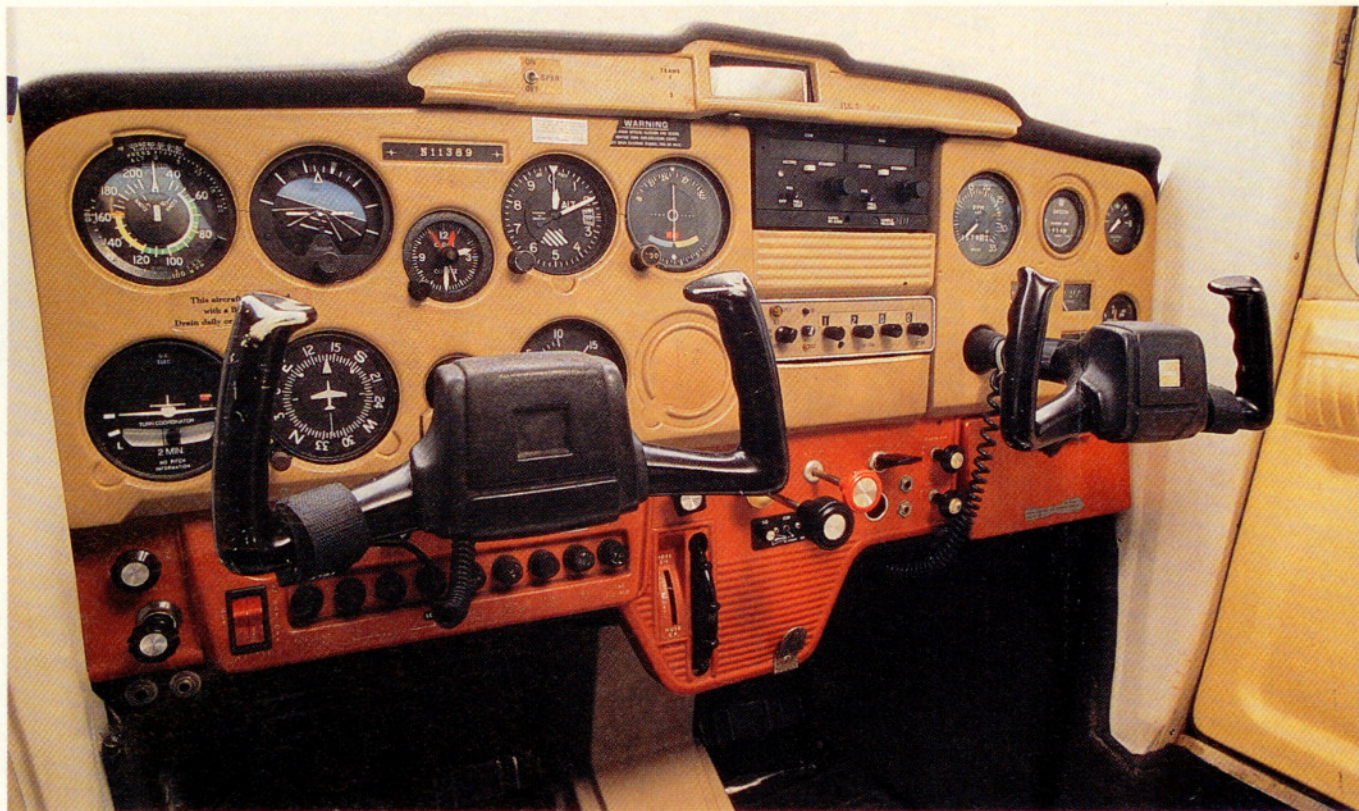
The last affordable airplane?

Why not make your second car an airplane?

BY ALTON K. MARSH

The term *affordable* gets kicked around a lot now that aircraft designs both old and new are flowing once again from factories. It has been used to describe new two- and four-place airplanes costing \$200,000 or more. As many of you tell us in person at trade shows, "That's as much as my house."

OK, what about \$20,000? Try getting a house for that. A Cessna 150 or 152 may be your best chance for truly affordable keys to the



sky. The models, in production for 25 years and ranging in horsepower from 100 to 110, are plentiful now as flight schools dump whole fleets of the trusty trainers in favor of newer aircraft.

Royson Parsons, executive director of the Cessna 150-152 Club, said he currently lists 300 Cessna 150s and 152s in the classified ads in his publications and on his Web site (www.cessna150-152club.com): The average price is \$20,000. Our own research indicates that cream puff VFR-equipped 150s and 152s sell for about \$24,000, while those equipped as IFR trainers go for \$30,000.

Why buy an IFR 150 or 152?

Need to rationalize to the family the purchase of what is essentially a fun machine? Tell them it is an excellent way to practice IFR skills (in VFR weather). We're not at all suggesting that these two-place scenery hunters are serious or even humorous IFR machines in actual weather. But can approaches in a 150 or 152 polish skills that translate to larger, faster singles? To test a 152's ability to keep you current, we rented one at Naples Air Center in Naples, Florida, and kept the speed up to 90 knots while making approaches to airports in the area. There was no difficulty at all with making approaches at that speed, a speed common to many larger singles. Overall, the 150 and 152 are best used



This 1973 Cessna 150L was purchased by E.T. Dunlap in 1988 for \$16,000. Dunlap took his private pilot check-ride in it.



for proficiency and fun, filling such roles as an IFR currency airplane, a time-builder for the rating-hungry pilot, or just a terrific way to slowly go where many have gone before to seek out new restaurants or civilizations.

The two models leave complexity behind. You needn't worry about the best manifold and rpm settings, the temperature of the nonexistent turbocharger, procedures for failure of retractable gear, or whether you will even get to your destination on time. Of course you won't. But you'll arrive smiling unless there is a crosswind. These aircraft require vigilance in tricky winds, a trait that has made them good trainers. Aside from challenging gale-force winds, it is the docile handling of the 150 and 152 that makes them so enjoyable to fly. Like everything else in

the aircraft's design, handling characteristics require very little effort. Landings are easy for post-student pilots, and takeoffs are uncomplicated. Once trimmed in flight, little effort is required to maintain the desired altitude. Weight and balance can be a bit touchy. Flying with a friend in a 152 one day, I decided to consume a piece of the pie we had purchased at our destination. As I leaned forward to lift a bite on my fork, the 152 started a gentle descent. It was part of the fun of being in such a small aircraft. Ground handling, thanks to the aircraft's light weight, is a back- and muscle-friendly experience.

Getting started

The best way to start your search is to call the AOPA Pilot Assistance Hotline for a free subject report on the aircraft. You'll

find articles like this one, data from the owner's manual, and names of owners' organizations. In this case, the AOPA technical specialists guided me to the Cessna Pilots Association (www.cessna.org), the Cessna Owners Organization (www.cessnaowner.org), and the Cessna 150-152 Club. When you actually find an aircraft you would like to call your own, check *Vref* on AOPA Online to get an idea of prices. You'll also find an aircraft review of the Cessna 150 online (www.aopa.org/members/files/aircraft/c150.html).

Parsons, head of the Atascadero, California-based Cessna 150-152 Club, offers valuable tips that only a type club can provide. (His organization also offers a 127-page booklet, *How to Buy a Cessna 150-152*.) While many sources will tell you that the rear OmniVision window with its new aft fuselage was introduced in 1964, it is more important to know the story behind that change. Parsons can provide it. "The new aft fuselage significantly reduced performance compared to the 1962 and 1963 models. It was not regained until the introduction of the Cessna 152 [in 1978]," Parsons said.

And this gem, also from Parsons: "The 1964 and 1965 airplanes retained the straight tail. Some consider the straight-tail fastbacks the best looking—others the OmniVision slant tails. But nearly everyone agrees that the straight-tail OmniVision is an ugly duckling."

Other tips from Parsons

The best-performing airplanes in the 150 and 152 fleet are the 1962 150B and the 1963 150C. They climb the fastest, have the highest ceilings, and require



Newly repainted, this Cessna 150L is based at Wings Field near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

the shortest runways, thanks to their light 1,500-pound gross weight. They also claim 109 knots for cruise, a faster speed than for any other model year of either the 150 or 152.

In terms of creature comforts, all models from 1966 on have the largest doors and baggage compartments. In 1967 the doors were bent outward 1.5 inches on each side to provide more cabin room.

The largest cabins are found in the 152—4.75 inches wider than the largest 150 cabin. The doors are slightly larger as well.

Any mechanical problems?

Most of the aircraft were used as trainers, a fact that warrants a careful pre-purchase inspection. It goes without saying that any student who flew a Cessna 150 or 152 tried to knock the landing gear off at least once. The gear has proven robust over the years. The tail tiedown eyelet will reveal by its damage—whether bent or ground flat on the bottom—the history of any botched soft-field takeoff attempts.

On the whole, there are very few significant airworthiness directives (ADs), Parsons said. Buyers should ask about recurring ADs, the ones that must be repeated during every annual inspection. A brief AD list includes ones addressing weight and balance issues, slippage of shoulder

harnesses, failure of up-elevator cables, and fuel-tank vent obstruction. The AOPA Title and Escrow Service provides a complete listing of the ADs on a particular make and model of aircraft, engine, and propeller. The charge is \$60 to members and \$70 to nonmembers. To order, call 800/654-4700 or order online (www.aopa.org/info/certified/tne.html). The AD report can be purchased alone but is also available as part of the Umbrella Protection Plan for \$199 that also includes a title search report, service difficulty report, accident and incident report, and copies of FAA 337 forms. While each report can be ordered separately, the Umbrella Protection Plan saves you 17 percent if you order all of them at once.

Any mods available?

There are scores of modifications available for the 150 and 152, but below are a few that Parsons has divided into two categories—affordable and expensive. A list of supplemental type certificates, vendors selling modifications, and pricing is available from Parsons' Cessna 150-152 Club. Write Royson Parsons, Executive Director, Cessna 150-152 Club, Post Office Box 1917, Atascadero, California 93422.

Affordable (there's that word again) modifications include anticollision strobes, flap and aileron gap seals, a carburetor icing detector, a belly-mounted

SPEC SHEET

1977 Cessna 150

New price: \$13,950

VFR-equipped Vref used price: \$22,900

Specifications

Powerplant	.....100-hp Continental O-200A
Recommended TBO	.....1,800 hr
Propeller	..... McCauley two-blade, fixed-pitch, 69-in dia
Length	.....24 ft
Height	.....8 ft 6 in
Wingspan	.....33 ft 4 in
Wing area	.....160 sq ft
Seats	.....2
Power loading	.....16 lb/hp
Wing loading	.....10 lb/sq ft
Empty weight	.....1,111 lb
Maximum gross weight	.....1,600 lb
Useful load	.....489 lb
Payload w/full fuel	.....354 lb
Fuel capacity, std.	.....26 gal (22.5 gal usable)
	.....156 lb (135 lb usable)
Baggage capacity	.....120 lb

Performance

Takeoff distance, ground roll	.....735 ft
Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle	.....1,385 ft
Maximum demonstrated crosswind component	.....12 kt

Rate of climb, sea level	.....670 fpm
Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv, std fuel (fuel consumption) @ 75% power, best economy, 7,000 ft	.....106 kt/3 hr
	.....(36 pph/6 gph)
Service ceiling	.....14,000 ft
Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle	.....1,075 ft
Landing distance, ground roll	.....445 ft

Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds

V_x (best angle of climb)	.....60 KIAS
V_y (best rate of climb)	.....67 KIAS
V_A (design maneuvering)	.....94 KIAS
V_{FE} (max flap extended)	.....87 KIAS
V_{NO} (max structural cruising)	.....104 KIAS
V_{NE} (never exceed)	.....140 KIAS
V_R (rotation)	.....48 KIAS
V_{S1} (stall, clean)	.....47 KIAS
V_{SO} (stall, in landing configuration)	.....42 KIAS

All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, sea level, gross weight conditions unless otherwise noted.

fuel drain, and conversions allowing aircraft to use auto gasoline. There are also improved replacements for such standard factory equipment as paper air filters, air vents, sun visors, oil screens, mixture controls, and engine starters.

Expensive modifications include powering up your humble steed with a 150-horsepower engine, adding a short-take-off-and-landing kit to the wings, converting the tricycle landing gear to conventional (tailwheel) gear, replacing the propeller with a more efficient one, and installing auxiliary or long-range fuel tanks.

A little history

A look at significant milestones from 1959 through 1984 may help you choose the features you need.

- 1960. The Cessna 150 Patroller is born, featuring plexiglass doors, 38-gallon tanks, and a message chute for when you need to airmail a friend.
- 1962. New propeller airfoil, giving improved speed and climb capability.
- 1965. Standard bench seat replaced with bucket seats.
- 1966. Vertical stabilizer gets swept back 35 degrees, decreasing rudder authority slightly. Increased rudder authority was regained in 1975 when



the rudder was enlarged.

- 1968. Flap system redesigned to allow hands-off retraction.
- 1969. Pull-type starter replaced with a key-operated magneto and starter. The new starter proved less robust and more expensive to repair than the pull starter. Instrument panel arranged in T-configuration.
- 1970. Aerobat model capable of limited positive-G maneuvers introduced with skylights in the cabin ceiling.
- 1971. The spring-steel main gear was replaced with tubular landing gear and the gear track width was increased from 6 feet 6 inches to 7 feet 7 inches, making it still easier to land. The landing light was moved from the wing to the engine

cowl where vibration lowered landing-light bulb life. It was moved back to the wing in 1984.

- 1978. Cessna 152 model introduced. Lycoming 110-hp engine introduced. The Continental 100-hp engine was having trouble with lead buildup because of the introduction of 100LL fuel. However, the Lycoming had more trouble with lead fouling than the previous Continental, a problem that was not to improve until the 1983 model year with a slightly less powerful Lycoming.

The good old days

Ten years ago you could have bought a good used Cessna 150 for \$13,000 to \$15,000. If only you had bought back then, right? Admittedly, \$20,000 is still a reasonably impressive pile of money, but at least you won't catch yourself saying, "Why, that's as

much as my house!"

ACPA

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i Links to additional information about the Cessna 150 and 152 may be found on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/pilot/links.shtml).