

TAKING FLIGHT

YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO BECOMING A PILOT



STEP-BY-STEP HANDBOOK

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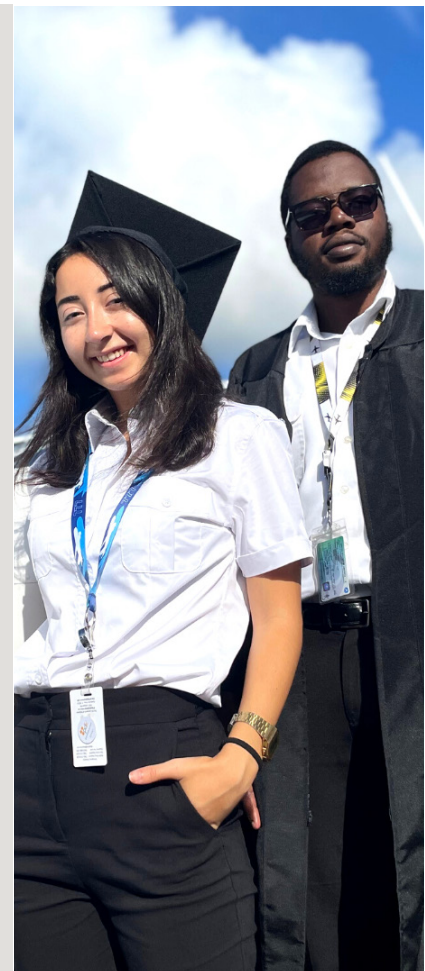
Uncover the journey of entering the airline industry, from first officer to captaincy, and other pilot career options.

Phase 5: Embracing the Lifestyle

Embrace the unique lifestyle and identity of a professional pilot, defined by passion, dedication, and the joy of flying.

Conclusion

Sum up the fulfilling pilot journey, emphasizing accomplishment and the extraordinary experiences that come with an aviation career.





I'm really excited to show you the steps to become a pilot. I won't say it's easy, but every step is super exciting. You'll achieve new things and feel those "butterflies in your stomach" almost every day.

When I tell people I'm a pilot, I'm not just talking about my job. I'm talking about who I am. Being a pilot isn't just a new job, it's a whole new lifestyle.

If the idea of being a pilot makes you feel excited and energized, then this is perfect for you. But if you're only thinking about pilot as a job with good benefits, then maybe this journey isn't right for you.

I can't wait to see you at the runway!

Ryan Telo

GUIDE

To Becoming A Professional Pilot



Starting a career as a pilot isn't as simple and straightforward as most other careers. There are several steps to take and decisions to make along the way. Various options are available that can put you on a structured path, while others are self-paced and leave many of the decisions up to you.

Unlike numerous careers that demand years of full-time schooling, there are flight training alternatives that enable you to work around your busy life. Admittedly, this route will probably take you longer, but it will still lead you to your dream job as a pilot.

PHASE 1

Starting Your Journey

The first step in your journey to starting a career as a pilot is to earn your private pilot license. This is the initial license every pilot begins with and serves as the foundation for developing your pilot skills while working towards your commercial pilot license.

During your training for the private pilot license, you will learn the fundamentals of flying. This knowledge will stay with you throughout your entire career, as it encompasses the basic principles governing how you will operate all the aircraft you encounter and how each of them remains airborne.

Choosing A Flight School

Picking the right flight school will play a significant role in the time it takes to earn your certificate and how beneficial the experience will be. You'll spend a substantial amount of time with your flight instructor and rely on them to shape you into a safe pilot.

There are two types of flight schools to choose from, both capable of guiding you to obtain your pilot's license. However, the approach they take to get you there may differ



Part 61 Flight School

Part 61 refers to Part 61 of the Federal Aviation Regulations. This section establishes the requirements for issuing various pilot certificates. However, it does not include specific requirements for flight schools. Any certified flight instructor can instruct a student pilot under Part 61, even if they aren't affiliated with a flight school.

A Part 61 flight school typically maintains a more flexible and relaxed training schedule. Because they aren't bound by federal requirements regarding their operations and curriculum, the training process can vary significantly from one school to another.

The advantage of this type of flight school is the cost factor. Without the time and expenses associated with adhering to federal regulations, they can offer training at a lower price



Part 141 Flight School

Part 141 also refers to a section of the Federal Aviation Regulations. However, this section does provide requirements for the operation of a flight school. Schools operating under Part 141 must meet specific standards to receive certification from the FAA. This includes having an approved curriculum and undergoing audits.

Part 141 flight schools are typically not as flexible and relaxed as Part 61 schools. They generally offer a faster-paced training program with strict schedules. In these schools, every instructor follows the same syllabus, and student pilots must fulfill predetermined requirements before progressing to the next phase of their training.

Because they utilize an approved training program, students are eligible to obtain their certificate with fewer hours compared to attending a Part 61 school. Students training with a Part 141 school can undergo their check ride with an FAA examiner after 35 hours of training, whereas Part 61 students must complete at least 40 hours.

A key advantage of a Part 141 flight school is that graduates often receive more favorable consideration from prospective employers due to the high training standards adhered to.

The drawback of a Part 141 school is its typically higher cost. In fact, tuition can be significantly greater than that of Part 61 schools. However, for aspiring career pilots, the additional investment may be deemed worthwhile.

Aviation degree programs

Aviation degree programs offer another option besides training with one of the above flight schools. Students in these aviation programs earn required credits from flight training and also acquire other valuable skills that are highly useful for a professional pilot. Having a degree in aviation is always a valuable addition to your resume.

Medical Certificate

Commercial pilots must possess a medical certificate issued by the FAA. A physician approved by the FAA will conduct a physical examination and grant the medical certificate if you satisfy the medical requirements.

Three classes of medical certificates exist: Third class, second class, and first class.

Individuals employed as commercial pilots, including charter pilots and crop dusters, must hold at least a second class medical certificate.

Airline pilots must possess a first class medical certificate, subject to the most rigorous requirements. The majority of healthy adults are eligible for a first class medical certificate.

Your First Flight

Most students begin with what is known as a ‘discovery flight.’ This initial flight lesson is designed to offer you a preview of what you’ll need to learn and provide an opportunity for you to decide if you genuinely want to commence flight training.



During this flight, the instructor will usually hand over the controls to you while in the air and teach you some fundamental maneuvers. These might involve basic turns. Depending on your performance with these basic maneuvers, you might have the chance to pilot the airplane up until entering the traffic pattern. The instructor will likely resume control at this stage.

Ground School

Flight training comprises two components: flying and ground school. While you practice takeoffs, landings, and other maneuvers in the air, you initially learn about them on the ground. During ground school, you will cover various topics, including:

- How airplanes fly
- Preflight checks
- Stalls
- Takeoff and landing procedures
- Weather
- Maneuvers
- Emergency procedures
- Types of airspace
- Radio communication

Ground school can typically be completed at your flight school. Some flight schools provide ground school in a classroom-like setting with fellow students, while others offer one-on-one instruction with your instructor. Alternatively, you can choose to attend ground school at different institutions or even pursue online options.

Many instructors suggest completing your ground school at the outset. Acquiring foundational knowledge right from the start can facilitate a faster and easier acquisition of the skills.

Written Exam

After finishing ground school, you will need to take a written exam with the FAA, which is administered at a designated testing facility. The exam will encompass all the subjects covered in your ground school. Numerous practice exams are available to ensure your readiness.

The completion of the written exam is a prerequisite before you can proceed to your check ride.

Stages of Flight Train

While each school might have a distinct curriculum, there are still specific skills you must acquire to become eligible for your certificate. Initially, you will learn basic skills, and then gradually advance to a stage where you will even engage in solo flight.

- **Turns** - A significant portion of your initial lessons will likely focus on mastering various types of turns
- **Stalls** - A substantial amount of time will be dedicated to learning stall recovery. This involves pulling the plane's nose up until your speed decreases to the point where lift is lost, followed by recovery. Your instructor will require you to practice this until you can react promptly and confidently
- **Pattern** - Much of your training will take place in the traffic pattern. This involves takeoffs, following the pattern back to final, landing, immediate takeoff, and starting the cycle again. Here, you'll practice landings extensively and refine your ability to maintain a specific altitude and speed.
- **Solo** - Once your instructor deems you capable, they will send you up for your first solo flight. During this solo flight, you will stay in the pattern and complete a minimum of three takeoffs and landings. Beware: on this day, it's advisable not to wear your best shirt, as there's a good chance they'll cut off the tail as a tradition.
- **Cross country** - As you gain more solo pattern time, you'll begin honing your navigation skills by planning a cross-country flight. This flight must involve an airport at least 50 nautical miles away from your departure point. You'll create a flight plan and utilize various navigation methods during the flight.
- **Solo cross country** - With increased comfort flying alone, you'll plan a solo cross-country flight to an airport at least 50 nm away and then return. Following this, you'll plan a more extended cross-country flight with three legs, each at least 50 nm apart. This journey will take you to two different airports before your return.
- **Practice for the check ride** - Subsequently, you'll refine your skills as you prepare for your examination with the FAA examiner. You'll practice all the elements you've learned so far, possibly flying to new airports along the way.
- **Night flying** - Flying at night necessitates greater reliance on navigational aids and familiarity with different depth perceptions. You'll practice night landings, maneuvers, and cross-country flights.
- **Oral exam and check ride** - When your instructor believes you're ready and you've logged the minimum required hours, you'll arrange your examination. This begins with an oral exam in which the examiner will ask a variety of questions that you must be able to answer. If you pass the oral phase, you'll proceed to flight phase with the examiner. This will be your first time as the pilot in command. The examiner will guide you through different maneuvers, landing types, simulated emergency scenarios, and whatever else you're comfortable with. After a successful session, you'll fly back to the airport, concluding the examination. Upon passing, you'll receive your pilot certificate immediately.

This is one of the most exhilarating moments in the pilot's journey. With a private pilot certificate, you are authorized to fly with passengers in any aircraft for which you hold a rating. Compensation for flights is not permitted, although passengers can cover their pro rata share of the flight expenses. For instance, if you are taking two passengers on a trip and they agree to share the costs, each of them can pay 1/3 of the flight expenses.

PHASE 2

Building Skills & Experience

The completion of the written exam is a prerequisite before you can proceed to your check ride.



Instrument Rating

Having an instrument rating isn't a requirement for obtaining your commercial pilot license, but it's a logical progression. Not only will any form of flying necessitate an instrument rating, but it will also enhance your capabilities as a safer pilot.

Before obtaining an instrument rating, your flying is restricted to VFR, which stands for Visual Flight Rules. This means you have to maintain a minimum distance below and above the clouds, as well as a specific horizontal distance from any clouds. There are also specific visibility minimums. Essentially, VFR mandates that you must have clear visibility of your path and maintain a visible reference of your location.

Once you've acquired an instrument rating, you're authorized to fly in conditions that would be restricted for VFR pilots. You can navigate through clouds and low visibility by relying on your instruments. This is referred to as Instrument Flight Rules, or IFR.

To attain your instrument rating, you will need to complete mandatory training and accumulate cross-country flight time. The requirements include:

- Having a private pilot certificate
- Flying at least 50 hours of cross-country flight as pilot in command (PIC)
- Complete ground school
- Log at least 40 hours of actual or simulated instrument time
 - At least 15 hours of instrument flight training from an authorized instructor
 - At least 3 hours in preparation for the checkride.
 - 1 cross-country flight under IFR
 - A distance of at least 250 NM along airways or ATC directed route
 - An instrument approach at each airport
 - 3 different kinds of approaches using navigation systems
- Pass a written test
- Pass your checkride

Commercial Pilot Certificate



Once you fulfill the prerequisites to acquire a commercial pilot certificate, you'll become eligible to undergo your commercial check ride. The requisites for this check ride are more stringent than those for obtaining a private pilot certificate.

The current prerequisites for obtaining a commercial certificate include:

- A minimum of 250 hours of flight time (190 hours if training in a Part 141 flight school).
- 100 hours as the pilot in command.
- 50 hours of cross-country time as the pilot in command.
- 20 hours of training, which encompass 10 hours of instrument training and 10 hours in a complex aircraft.
- 10 hours of solo training, including cross-country and night flying.

PHASE 3

Advancing Your Career

Certified Flight Instructor

Now that you possess a commercial pilot certificate, you can receive compensation for flying. However, your options for professional pilot roles remain limited until you accumulate more flight hours.

The most prevalent approach for commercial pilots to amass flight hours is by becoming a flight instructor. To achieve this, you'll need to obtain an additional certificate as a certified flight instructor (CFI). The requirements for becoming a CFI include:

- Have a commercial pilot certificate
- Passing a written test.
- Passing a checkride, from the right seat.

Until this stage, you would have been flying from the left seat. As a flight instructor, you'll need to adjust to flying from the right seat while instructing students.

If you attended a Part 161 flight school, there's a good chance you could secure a job there as a flight instructor. This is frequently integrated into their training program, aiding you in accruing hours for your journey towards becoming an airline pilot.

The compensation as a flight instructor might not be substantial, but at least you'll be earning money through flying instead of having to cover the costs of your flight time.

Build Time

There are other options for accumulating flight hours. While you could build hours by flying at your own expense, airlines typically prefer to see experience gained from working as a professional pilot in some capacity.

Additional career avenues for accruing flight hours include:

- Skydive Jump Pilot
- Banner Towing Pilot
- Glider Towing Pilot
- Tour/Sightseeing Pilot
- Ferry Pilot
- Aerial Survey Pilot

You can also combine any of these roles with being a flight instructor.

Another means of accumulating hours without cost is to act as a safety pilot for someone. A safety pilot occupies the right seat while an individual maintains their instrument or other ratings current.

Additional Training

There are other ratings and skills you'll need to acquire to become an airline pilot. Completing these early on will ensure you're prepared to apply for airline pilot positions once you meet the required flight hours.

Multi-Engine Rating



Up to this point, you've only needed to be proficient in flying a single-engine airplane. However, before you can operate larger aircraft, you must also gain expertise in flying multi-engine planes and obtain the corresponding certification.

Similar to the previous ratings, this process involves training and a checkride. There aren't specific hourly requirements for training; the duration will depend on how long it takes for you to acquire the necessary knowledge to operate a multi-engine aircraft and successfully pass the checkride. Nevertheless, you must spend a minimum of three hours in a multi-engine plane before taking the checkride.

Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) Certificate

The final certificate you'll need before becoming an airline pilot is the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) Certificate. This is obligatory for pilots flying with airlines.

Before applying for this certificate, you must log at least 1,500 hours of total flight time, which should include:

- 500 hours of cross-country flight
- 250 hours as Pilot in Command (PIC)
- 100 hours of night flying
- 75 hours of instrument flying

Obtaining the ATP Certificate requires a more comprehensive flight school experience, encompassing ground school, in-flight training, and simulator training.

After completing the requisite training, you'll be required to take a written test followed by another check ride.

PHASE 4

Entering Airline Career



You're Finally Prepared For The World Of Airlines!

With your hours accrued, requisite certificates and ratings obtained, you're now poised to commence the process of applying for pilot positions.

Novice airline pilots typically commence their careers at smaller regional airlines. After securing a position with an airline, you'll undergo further training to attain a type rating for the specific aircraft you'll be operating.

Type ratings for such aircraft can be notably costly; hence, some airlines cover this expense. The training focuses on instructing you to fly the precise aircraft model you'll be piloting for your new employer. Due to the exorbitant expense of actual flight, this training occurs in approved simulators.

Your initial role within the airline will be that of a first officer, also known as a co-pilot. The first officer assists the captain in flight preparations, flight operations, and is prepared to assume control of the aircraft if circumstances dictate during the flight.

As a first officer, your goal is to ascend to the rank of captain. The timeline or hours required for this promotion are variable and contingent on the airline's requirements and your performance. However, it's reasonable to anticipate this transition taking several years at a minimum.

PHASE 5

EMBRACING THE LIFESTYLE

Becoming a captain at a regional airline usually follows as the next step. If your goal is to advance to a major airline, garnering experience as a captain will provide the expertise these larger airlines seek.

Alternative Pilot Careers

An airline pilot role isn't the sole career path for pilots. Many choose to serve as charter or corporate pilots. This might entail piloting smaller turboprop airplanes that often accommodate 6-8 passengers, or larger, faster business jets such as the Gulfstream G550.

Airline experience significantly benefits those aspiring to become corporate or charter pilots. However, some individuals opt to work directly for charter operators without first going through an airline.

Your schedule as a corporate or charter pilot will vary considerably from one week to the next, given the on-demand nature of the work. You might even find yourself needing to respond to a call late at night to ensure the aircraft is ready for takeoff within two hours.

The Essence

Becoming a professional pilot demands strenuous effort and a considerable investment of time. However, few other careers offer such enjoyable training. People don't become pilots solely due to pragmatic career choices; they choose this path out of their passion for flying. The allure of gazing upon the Earth from the sky and experiencing landings in various global locations almost daily drives their choice.

It's crucial to recognize that being a pilot is more than just a job—it's a lifestyle. It's not about eagerly anticipating Fridays or dreading Mondays; it's about embracing every day as a pilot, whether you're flying or not.

Being a pilot isn't merely an occupation; it's an integral part of your identity.



PILOT RYAN



In conclusion, the journey to becoming a pilot is an exhilarating adventure filled with challenges, growth, and the joy of flight. While not an easy path, each step you take is a step toward embracing a new way of life, not just a new career. The thrill of flying, the sense of accomplishment, and the dedication required define this journey as something more than just a job choice. If the skies ignite your passion and set your heart racing, then this path is yours to follow. Thank you for completing this material, and I wish you the best of luck as you embark on your journey to become a professional pilot. Fly high and stay safe. See you on the ramp!