

PILOT QUALIFICATIONS

Task A Study Guide · ACS Area of Operation I, Task A

FAA-S-ACS-6C · PA.I.A · SOURCES: 14 CFR PART 61 / PART 91 · AC 61-142 · AC 68-1A · REV 2026-07

How to use this guide: the body text is your study material. The boxed **source windows** are the actual FAA text behind each rule, quoted word for word, so you can see exactly what the examiner's reference says. Learn the concept, then read the source.

01 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Category (airmen): Airplane, rotorcraft, glider, or lighter-than-air.

Class (airmen): Single-engine land/sea, multi-engine land/sea.

Category (aircraft): A grouping based on intended use or operating limitations: normal, utility, acrobatic, commuter, or transport.

Class (aircraft): Airplane, rotorcraft, glider, balloon.

Type: A specific make and basic model of aircraft, including modifications that do not change its handling or flight characteristics. A type rating is required for large aircraft (over 12,500 lb), turbojet-powered airplanes, powered-lift, and other aircraft designated by the Administrator.

Night: The time between the end of evening civil twilight and the beginning of morning civil twilight. For passenger-carrying currency, night begins 1 hour after sunset and ends 1 hour before sunrise.

Pilot in Command (PIC): The pilot directly responsible for, and the final authority as to, the operation of the aircraft.

Currency: Meeting the minimum regulatory requirements to act as PIC, such as three takeoffs and landings within the preceding 90 days to carry passengers.

Proficiency: Having a high degree of competence and skill in operating an aircraft, which often exceeds the minimum currency requirements.

Compensation: The receipt of anything of value that is contingent upon the pilot acting as PIC. Compensation does not require a profit, a profit motive, or the actual payment of funds.

Operating expenses: Costs that directly arise from the use of an aircraft for air navigation, including fuel, oil, airport expenditures, and rental fees.

Common purpose: A requirement for a private pilot to share expenses with passengers. The pilot and passengers must have a genuine, shared reason for traveling to the destination, and the pilot must have their own reason for the flight other than receiving compensation.

Holding out: Any means used to communicate to the public that a transportation service is indiscriminately available to anyone who wants it. Advertising in any form raises the question of holding out.

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 1.1

"**Night** means the time between the end of evening civil twilight and the beginning of morning civil twilight, as published in the Air Almanac, converted to local time."

"**Pilot in command** means the person who: (1) Has final authority and responsibility for the operation and safety of the flight; (2) Has been designated as pilot in command before or during the flight; and (3) Holds the appropriate category, class, and type rating, if appropriate, for the conduct of the flight."

14 CFR 1.1 General definitions, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

02 CERTIFICATION, RECENT EXPERIENCE, RECORDS

PA.I.A.K1

PRIVATE PILOT CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

FAR 61.103 / 61.109

To be issued a private pilot certificate, you must:

- Be at least 17 years old
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language
- Pass the required knowledge test
- Have at least 40 hours of flight time, including:
 - 20 hours dual instruction, with 3 hours cross-country, 3 hours night (including one cross-country over 100 NM total distance and 10 night takeoffs and landings to a full stop), 3 hours instrument training, and 3 hours of practical test prep within the preceding 2 calendar months
 - 10 hours solo, with 5 hours solo cross-country (including one flight of 150 NM total distance with full-stop landings at 3 points and one segment over 50 NM straight-line), and 3 takeoffs and landings to a full stop at a towered airport

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.109(a)(5)

"10 hours of solo flight time in a single-engine airplane, consisting of at least (i) 5 hours of solo cross-country time; (ii) One solo cross country flight of 150 nautical miles total distance, with full-stop landings at three points, and one segment of the flight consisting of a straight-line distance of more than 50 nautical miles between the takeoff and landing locations; and (iii) Three takeoffs and three landings to a full stop (with each landing involving a flight in the traffic pattern) at an airport with an operating control tower."

14 CFR 61.109 Aeronautical experience, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

CURRENCY AND RECENT FLIGHT EXPERIENCE FAR 61.57

You cannot exercise the privileges of your certificate to carry passengers unless you meet the appropriate recency requirements.

- To carry passengers: 3 takeoffs and 3 landings in the same category, class, and type (if required) within the preceding 90 days
- Tailwheel aircraft: landings must be to a full stop
- Night passenger-carrying: 3 full-stop takeoffs and landings at night (1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise) within the preceding 90 days in the same category, class, and type

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.57(b)(1)

"Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft carrying persons during the period beginning 1 hour after sunset and ending 1 hour before sunrise, unless within the preceding 90 days that person has made at least three takeoffs and three landings to a full stop during the period beginning 1 hour after sunset and ending 1 hour before sunrise, and (i) That person acted as sole manipulator of the flight controls; and (ii) The required takeoffs and landings were performed in an aircraft of the same category, class, and type (if a class or type rating is required)."

14 CFR 61.57 Recent flight experience: Pilot in command, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

TAKEAWAY: Day currency landings can be touch and goes (except tailwheel). Night currency landings must always be to a full stop, and the clock uses sunset plus one hour, not civil twilight.

FLIGHT REVIEWS FAR 61.56

- You may not act as PIC unless you have completed a flight review within the preceding 24 calendar months
- A flight review includes at least 1 hour of ground training and 1 hour of flight training with a CFI
- Alternatives: passing a practical test or proficiency check for a certificate, rating, or operating privilege, or completing one or more phases of the FAA WINGS pilot proficiency program

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.56(a), (c)

"(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (f) of this section, a flight review consists of a minimum of 1 hour of flight training and 1 hour of ground training."

"(c) Except as provided in paragraphs (d), (e), and (g) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft unless, since the beginning of the 24th calendar month before the month in which that pilot acts as pilot in command, that person has" completed a flight review and received a logbook endorsement certifying satisfactory completion.

14 CFR 61.56 Flight review, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31. Closing clause of (c) condensed; numbering in original.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FAR 61.60

You must notify the FAA Airmen Certification Branch in writing of a change of permanent mailing address within 30 days. After 30 days without notification, you may not exercise the privileges of your certificate.

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.60

"The holder of a pilot, flight instructor, or ground instructor certificate who has made a change in permanent mailing address may not, after 30 days from that date, exercise the privileges of the certificate unless the holder has notified in writing the FAA, Airman Certification Branch, P.O. Box 25082, Oklahoma City, OK 73125, of the new permanent mailing address, or if the permanent mailing address includes a post office box number, then the holder's current residential address."

14 CFR 61.60 Change of address, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

LOGBOOK RECORDS FAR 61.51

Each logbook entry should include:

- General information: date, total flight or lesson time, departure and arrival locations, aircraft type and identification, safety pilot name if required
- Type of experience: solo, PIC, SIC, dual instruction received, simulator or device training
- Conditions of flight: day or night, actual instrument, simulated instrument

Student pilots can log PIC time only when they are the sole occupant of the aircraft, hold a current solo endorsement, and are undergoing training for a certificate or rating.

Certificated pilots can log PIC time when they are the sole manipulator of the controls of an aircraft for which they are rated, or when they are the sole occupant of the aircraft.

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.51(e)

"(e)(1) A sport, recreational, private, commercial, or airline transport pilot may log pilot in command flight time for flights (i) Except when logging flight time under § 61.159(c), when the pilot is the sole manipulator of the controls of an aircraft for which the pilot is rated, or has sport pilot privileges for that category and class of aircraft, if the aircraft class rating is appropriate"

"(e)(4) A student pilot may log pilot-in-command time only when the student pilot (i) Is the sole occupant of the aircraft or is performing the duties of pilot of command of an airship requiring more than one pilot flight crewmember; (ii) Has a solo flight endorsement as required under § 61.87 of this part; and (iii) Is undergoing training for a pilot certificate or rating."

14 CFR 61.51 Pilot logbooks, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

03 PRIVILEGES AND LIMITATIONS PA.I.A.K2 • FAR 61.113 / 61.31

TYPE RATINGS AND ADDITIONAL ENDORSEMENTS FAR 61.31

A **type rating** is required for:

- Large aircraft (maximum certificated takeoff weight greater than 12,500 lb, except lighter-than-air)
- Turbojet-powered airplanes
- Powered-lift
- Other aircraft specified by the Administrator

Additional **training and a one-time logbook endorsement** are required for:

- **High performance:** an airplane with an engine of more than 200 HP
- **High altitude:** pressurized aircraft with a service ceiling or maximum operating altitude, whichever is lower, above 25,000 ft MSL
- **Complex:** retractable landing gear, flaps, and a controllable pitch propeller
- **Tailwheel:** flight training and endorsement before acting as PIC of a tailwheel airplane

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.31(f)(1)

"Except as provided in paragraph (f)(2) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command of a high-performance airplane (an airplane with an engine of more than 200 horsepower), unless the person has (i) Received and logged ground and flight training from an authorized instructor in a high-performance airplane, or in a full flight simulator or flight training device that is representative of a high-performance airplane, and has been found proficient in the operation and systems of the airplane; and (ii) Received a one-time endorsement in the pilot's logbook from an authorized instructor who certifies the person is proficient to operate a high-performance airplane."

14 CFR 61.31 Type rating requirements, additional training, and authorization requirements, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31. Note: more than 200 HP, not 200 HP or more.

TAKEAWAY:

High performance is more than 200 horsepower. A 200 HP engine does not require the endorsement; a 201 HP engine does.

PIC RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY FAR 91.3

The pilot in command is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of the aircraft.

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 91.3(a), (b)

"(a) The pilot in command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft."

"(b) In an in-flight emergency requiring immediate action, the pilot in command may deviate from any rule of this part to the extent required to meet that emergency."

14 CFR 91.3 Responsibility and authority of the pilot in command, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

PRIVATE PILOT PRIVILEGES AND LIMITATIONS FAR 61.113

You may not act as PIC of an aircraft carrying passengers or property for compensation or hire. Key exceptions:

- You may share operating expenses (fuel, oil, airport expenditures, or rental fees only) with passengers on a pro rata basis, provided you do not pay less than your pro rata share
- The flight must satisfy the common purpose test and you must not be holding out
- An aircraft salesperson with 200+ hours may demonstrate an aircraft to a prospective buyer
- Charitable, nonprofit, or community event airlift (FAR 91.146): requires at least 500 hours of flight time, sponsor notification to the responsible Flight Standards office at least 7 days before the event, day VFR, and a standard category aircraft in compliance with the 100-hour inspection requirement; no aerobatic or formation flights

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.113(a), (c)

"(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) through (h) of this section, no person who holds a private pilot certificate may act as pilot in command of an aircraft that is carrying passengers or property for compensation or hire; nor may that person, for compensation or hire, act as pilot in command of an aircraft."

"(c) A private pilot may not pay less than the pro rata share of the operating expenses of a flight with passengers, provided the expenses involve only fuel, oil, airport expenditures, or rental fees."

14 CFR 61.113 Private pilot privileges and limitations: Pilot in command, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 91.146(b)(9)

"(9) A private pilot acting as pilot in command has at least 500 hours of flight time;"

"(e) At least seven days before the event, each sponsor of an event described in this section must furnish to the responsible Flight Standards office for the area where the event is scheduled: ..."

14 CFR 91.146 Passenger-carrying flights for the benefit of a charitable, nonprofit, or community event, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

TAKEAWAY: The salesperson exception is 200 hours. The charitable event exception is 500 hours. Do not mix these two numbers up on the oral.

EXPENSE SHARING RULES AC 61-142

- **Allowed expenses:** fuel, oil, airport expenditures, or aircraft rental fees only
- **Prohibited expenses:** maintenance, insurance, depreciation, navigation charts, and anything not specifically listed
- **Common purpose:** the pilot must have their own reason for traveling to the destination. If the pilot has no personal business at the destination, no common purpose exists and expense sharing is not allowed

- **Holding out:** communication about the flight must be limited to a defined and limited group with whom the pilot has a pre-existing relationship (family, friends, close acquaintances). Posting publicly or advertising is holding out

SOURCE WINDOW

AC 61-142

On allowable expenses: "The only operating expenses that may be shared are specifically listed in § 61.113(c). Those expenses are fuel, oil, airport expenditures, or aircraft rental fees."

On the common purpose test, the FAA asks whether, "but for the receipt of compensation, the pilot would not have taken that flight."

On holding out: "'Holding out' is accomplished by any means that communicates to the public that a transportation service is indiscriminately available to the members of that segment of the public that it is designed to attract."

AC 61-142, Sharing Aircraft Operating Expenses in Accordance with 14 CFR 61.113(c), paras 7.2, 9.2, 10.2

OTHER LIMITATIONS

- **Dropping objects** (FAR 91.15): objects may be dropped only if reasonable precautions are taken to avoid injury or damage
- **Formation flight** (FAR 91.111): only by arrangement with the PIC of each aircraft in the formation

04 MEDICAL CERTIFICATES PA.I.A.K3 • FAR 61.23

All airplane pilots must hold a valid and appropriate medical certificate (or qualify under BasicMed) to exercise their certificate privileges. Examinations are conducted by FAA Aviation Medical Examiners (AMEs).

CLASS	REQUIRED FOR	DURATION (THIRD-CLASS PRIVILEGES)
First-class	ATP privileges	Under 40 at exam: 60 calendar months 40 or older at exam: 24 calendar months
Second-class	Commercial pilot privileges	
Third-class	Private, recreational, student, or flight instructor (when acting as PIC) privileges	Expires at the end of the last day of the month

Medical Deficiency FAR 61.53

You may not fly as PIC or required crewmember when you know or have reason to know of a medical condition, or are taking a medication or treatment, that would make you unable to meet the requirements of your medical certificate.

"No person who holds a medical certificate issued under part 67 of this chapter may act as pilot in command, or in any other capacity as a required pilot flight crewmember, while that person: (1) Knows or has reason to know of any medical condition that would make the person unable to meet the requirements for the medical certificate necessary for the pilot operation; or (2) Is taking medication or receiving other treatment for a medical condition that results in the person being unable to meet the requirements for the medical certificate necessary for the pilot operation."

14 CFR 61.53 Prohibition on operations during medical deficiency, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

05 **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS WHILE FLYING** PA.I.A.K4 • FAR 61.3

You must have in your physical possession or readily accessible in the aircraft:

- Pilot certificate
- Medical certificate (or BasicMed documentation)
- Government-issued photo ID

You must present these upon request to: the FAA Administrator, an authorized NTSB representative, any federal, state, or local law enforcement officer, or an authorized TSA representative.

"Each person who holds an airman certificate, temporary document in accordance with paragraph (a)(1)(v) or (vi) of this section, medical certificate, documents establishing alternative medical qualification under part 68 of this chapter, authorization, or license required by this part must present it and their photo identification as described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section for inspection upon a request from: (1) The Administrator; (2) An authorized representative of the National Transportation Safety Board; (3) Any Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer; or (4) An authorized representative of the Transportation Security Administration."

14 CFR 61.3 Requirement for certificates, ratings, and authorizations, eCFR current as of 2026-07-31

06 **BASICMED** PA.I.A.K5 • FAR 61.113(I) / 61.23(C)(3) / PART 68

BasicMed allows pilots to fly using a valid U.S. driver's license instead of an FAA medical certificate, provided:

- You have held an FAA medical certificate at any time after July 14, 2006
- You have completed an approved medical education course in the preceding 24 calendar months
- You have received a medical examination from a state-licensed physician in the preceding 48 calendar months

BasicMed limitations:

- Aircraft authorized to carry not more than 7 occupants, with no more than 6 passengers on board
- Maximum takeoff weight of not more than 12,500 lb
- No flight above 18,000 ft MSL
- No flight outside the United States unless authorized by the host country
- No indicated airspeed above 250 knots

You must keep in your logbook: the completed medical examination checklist (FAR 68.7) and the medical education course completion certificate.

SOURCE WINDOW

14 CFR 61.113(i)

"A private pilot may act as pilot in command or serve as a required flightcrew member of an aircraft without holding a medical certificate issued under part 67 of this chapter provided the pilot holds a valid U.S. driver's license, meets the requirements of § 61.23(c)(3), and complies with this section and all of the following conditions and limitations: (1) The aircraft is authorized to carry not more than 7 occupants, has a maximum takeoff weight of not more than 12,500 pounds, is operated with no more than 6 passengers on board, and is not a transport category rotorcraft certified to airworthiness standards under part 29 of this chapter; and (2) The flight, including each portion of the flight, is not carried out (i) At an altitude that is more than 18,000 feet above mean sea level; (ii) Outside the United States unless authorized by the country in which the flight is conducted; or (iii) At an indicated airspeed exceeding 250 knots; and (3) The pilot has available in his or her logbook (i) The completed medical examination checklist required under § 68.7 of this chapter; and (ii) The certificate of course completion required under § 61.23(c)(3)."

14 CFR 61.113(i), eCFR current as of 2026-07-31, reflecting the 2024 BasicMed expansion (7 occupants / 12,500 lb). See also AC 68-1A.

07 RISK MANAGEMENT PA.I.A.R1 / PA.I.A.R2

PROFICIENCY VERSUS CURRENCY PA.I.A.R1

There is a wide gap between what the FAA requires for minimum currency and being proficient in operating an aircraft. Many pilots meet the basic requirements of a flight review and 3 takeoffs and landings every 90 days, but few are ready for the unexpected.

Over the course of two years between flight reviews, you will seldom stall the airplane, execute a go-around, or encounter instrument conditions. Building a personal training plan that addresses these areas is critical.

Consider conducting a flight review with an instructor every 6 or 12 months instead of the minimum 24. Airline pilots are tested every 6 months on emergency procedures and unusual attitudes for good reason.

FLYING UNFAMILIAR AIRCRAFT PA.I.A.R2

Getting a checkout in any new aircraft is essential, even if it is the same type you have been flying. Different avionics, flight displays, and cockpit layouts can lead to task saturation and loss of control.

No endorsement is required to fly aircraft with different avionics (such as a Garmin G1000 versus traditional gauges), but complex avionics systems require training to operate safely.

TAKEAWAY: Legal is the floor, not the standard. Currency keeps you legal; proficiency keeps you safe.

North Aero, Inc. · Private Pilot Checkride Prep · Task A: Pilot Qualifications · Rev 2026-07. Regulatory quotes verified against the eCFR and FAA publications on 2026-07-31. This guide is a training aid and is not a substitute for the current regulations, the ACS, or the judgment of your instructor.