



# HOW TO BECOME AN AIRLINE PILOT

United States



S K Y B O R N E

AIRLINE ACADEMY

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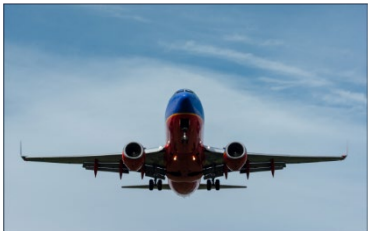


## WHAT DOES A PILOT DO?

Firstly, let's distinguish the different types of pilot. The two main categories of aircraft are fixed-wing (airplane) and rotary wing (helicopter). There are then three types of flying category: private, commercial, and military.



**Private pilots** can fly light aircraft around for leisure, for example the small two-four seater propeller planes you've probably seen flying low in the sky near your house, such as Cessnas and Pipers. They can fly solo or take friends and family up. You cannot earn money from this type of flying.



**Commercial pilots** undergo further training to private pilots, which will allow them to hold a Commercial Pilots Licence (CPL). This allows them to fly revenue flights for companies and airlines. Ranging from sightseeing flights, to transporting cargo and passengers around the world, this is the area that Skyborne is involved in and we'll focus on that.



**Military pilots** go down a completely different route, undertaking specialist training towards operating military aircraft to serve in the armed forces.

Pilot duties involve ensuring that the aircraft and daily operations are conducted with the highest standards of safety, efficiency and competency.

It is a common misconception that cadet pilots are 'co-pilots' who never touch the controls. This couldn't be further from the truth.

As a Cadet First Officer you will be performing takeoffs, approaches, landings, and general cruise tasks, employing a combination of manual operation and monitoring computer-controlled flying systems. You will be required to keep fuel logs, communicate with Air Traffic Control (ATC) and work as part of a team.

Communication is a vital aspect of being an airline pilot as you will communicate with your fellow pilots, cabin crew, air traffic control, and passengers throughout, to ensure a safe, efficient and smooth flight.

Depending on which airline and aircraft you operate on, you may return to your home base at the end of each day or find yourself down route in a foreign city for a night or two.

One thing is sure that it is a very rewarding career.



# DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AIRLINE PILOT



Commercial flying has many formats and different operators each have their own style. However, the basic role remains similar. Here's our summary of short haul and long haul.

## Short-Haul

Many airline pilots begin their careers flying short haul. Due to a pilot's salary, employers will often want the maximum return on this outlay. In short haul this means a lot of trips, or 'sectors'. A typical flying day will consist of either two long sectors, or four short or medium sectors.

Your shift pattern will consist of 'earlies', reporting for work from around 0500 onwards, or 'lates', finishing any time up to midnight. Blocks of work are usually between four and six days, with a couple of days or so off before your next shift. The amount of duty and flying hours you can perform in certain periods is calculated in line with legal limits.

Modern short haul flying demands energy, especially when you are getting used to the job. Repetitive early morning alarm calls are followed by long, intensive days. There is little time to relax as turnarounds are short, often as little as 25 minutes.

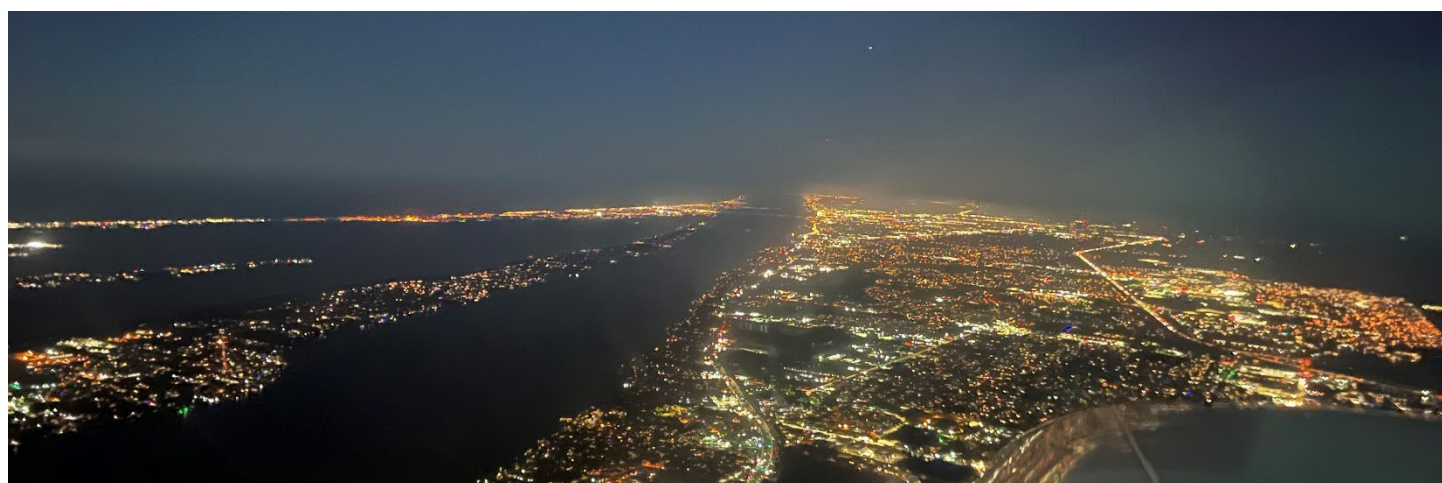
Your day will begin with a briefing, which may or may not be with the cabin crew, depending on the airline you work for. The weather is studied for destination, alternate, en-route alternate and suitable diversions are identified along the way. A host of other parameters are also considered such as weights, loads, flight times, slot delays, and technical defects with the aircraft. From here, a fuel decision is made and then it's time to go to the aircraft.

Once on board, you will begin extensive pre-flight checks. If a complicated defect crops up which requires some careful modification to the standard operation – for example one of the thrust reversers is unserviceable – then you need to be very organised to make sure that everything gets completed ready for the Standard Time of Departure. A commercial pilot's priority is to make every flight a safe flight, but also to embrace customer service. If, as a team, you don't deliver an on-time and outstanding customer experience then passengers won't travel with your airline.

The modern commercial pilot must demonstrate leadership, commercial awareness and excellent communication & team skills, as well as the required high level of technical proficiency.

Flying can be intense but is very satisfying. Air Traffic Control is almost universally of a high standard, the airports are well-equipped, and you get to experience cities and cultures around the world should you be lucky enough to get the chance of an overnight stay. The unpredictability of weather is suitably challenging, with thick fog in the winter, gales in the spring and autumn, and towering continental thunderstorms in a hot summer all meaning you are exposed to very varied flying conditions.

Many pilots have no desire to do anything else than stay close to home, on and be a 'flat-earther' all their careers. Others view short-haul flying as a temporary springboard into a wholly different flying discipline – long-haul.



# Long-Haul

Although the fundamental sequence involved in flying an aircraft from A to B is the same as in short haul, what differs between the two is the pace of long-haul flying. Everything takes longer. This is due to the briefings needing to take into account more adverse weather factors for en-route diversions or the strict requirements of ETOPS (Extended Twin Operations). Loading passengers and freight takes longer because there's more of both on a long haul flight. Inserting the flight plan route into the computer is a lengthier process as each point has to be checked thoroughly, especially when it comes to transatlantic trips.

The duration of the take-off roll is also significantly longer. When a wide-bodied aircraft is at its maximum take-off load, it can be over a minute roaring down the runway at near full power. An experience that is definitely one of those 'this is why I do the job' moments.

Let's not forget that the flights themselves are longer too. Once airborne, the first hour and a half is generally pretty busy, as ancillary data has to upload due to not having enough time to do this on the ground. This includes wind speeds and directions; getting oceanic clearance if you're heading that way; and checking the tracks and distances on the route. Then once you're on your way, the flight settles down to periodic checks of the route, timings and fuel quantities and temperatures. When operating longer flights you carry an additional pilot, allowing the operating crew a chance to get some rest so that everyone is as fresh as possible for the approach and landing into the destination. This is vital, as you could be approaching a busy crowded airfield such as Chicago or New York, or some of the more challenging airfields, meaning your full concentration is required.

Fatigue is a big concern in long-haul flying. The legal responsibility is to report for work fit and rested, so managing rest is a vital skill. This takes planning and care, as a typical pattern is to go to work when everyone else is thinking of going home, for a flight which lands sometime after midnight. Your alarm then abruptly wakes you up in the hotel room 24-hours later and you then fly through the night to finish when everyone else is just starting their day.

Alternatively, a 48-hour trip in a time zone eight hours apart from the US is exceptionally tough on the mind and body. The ability to sleep anywhere at any time for any length of time is crucial. It's not unusual for some crew to never crack this aspect of long-haul and to request going back to short haul so that can have nights in a bed instead of a cockpit.

However, the rewards of long-haul are plentiful. Your office is the world and the view out of the window is phenomenal. All the elements you learn in geography as a child and meteorology at flight school comes to life before your very eyes.

You also get to experience some truly amazing places with your time off and by becoming a regular visitor to these destinations, you slowly get to know their cultures and ways of living. You read the newspapers, follow the progress of an adopted sports team, find your favourite cafés and restaurants like a local. It's nice and a truly rewarding experience



# STEPS TO BECOMING AN AIRLINE PILOT

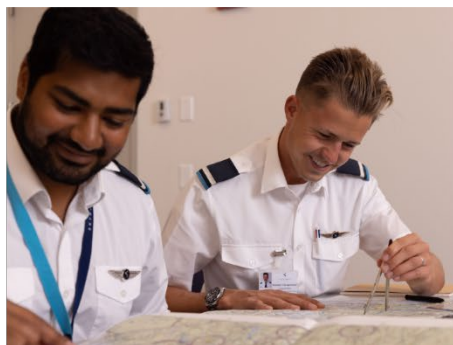




# Skills & Qualifications

To start on your journey, here are some of the requirements to begin training as a pilot:

- > **Personal qualities:** a passion for flight, motivation and ambition, self-discipline, technical aptitude, tolerance of pressure, maturity for your age, and spatial awareness.
- > **Education:** Regional airlines typically prefer some college experience, while some major airlines generally require a degree (any field is acceptable).
- > **Assessment:** There is no upfront assessment for the Skyborne Airline Academy meaning that you can start as soon as you are ready! If at the end of Private, you want to apply for an airline program, then the Skyborne Careers Team will arrange an assessment but this is only applicable if you are considering an airline pathway. The assessment will involve computer-based aptitude testing, personality questionnaires, teamwork exercises and competency-based interviews.
- > **Medical certification:** you'll need an examination to test your hearing, eyesight, coordination, and overall health. Upon successful completion, you will receive a valid Class 1 Medical Certificate. All pilots are required to have this certificate throughout their flying careers.
- > **Vision:** you do not need perfect vision to be a commercial pilot. As long as your vision can be corrected to 20/20 with glasses or contacts, you are eligible for an FAA First-Class Medical Certificate, which makes you eligible to fly as a civilian professional pilot. If you are colorblind, an FAA Medical can still be obtained by some. The restrictions will depend on the degree of colorblindness. The FAA has several mechanisms for making this determination; consult an Aeromedical Examiner (AME) for more information. Some airlines have their own restrictions that are more stringent than the FAA. There are additional vision and health restrictions that apply, as well as waivers, so it is best to consult an FAA Aviation Medical Examiner about your specific situation.
- > **Age:** you can hold a Commercial Pilot certificate as young as 18 years old, but most airlines require applicants to be at least 21 years old, the minimum age for the ATP certificate. The mandatory retirement age is 65 years old, so if you want to become a career pilot, look at how many years' earnings you'll have before retirement and ensure that it's a worthwhile investment.



## Training Pathway

The Skyborne Airline Academy is a career development program that can take you from Private through to CFI and into a flight instructor position with Skyborne, following an assessment. Upon successful completion of the assessment you will be placed with one of our esteemed Partner Airlines - Delta, Endeavor, Envoy, JSX or SkyWest, with more to follow.

The Skyborne Airline Academy provides industry leading, quality training to help you achieve YOUR flying career goals, whatever they may be. Whether you are striving to fly for an airline, corporate operator or become a career certified flight instructor, every route is open to you through the Airline Academy. If an airline is where you are aiming your sights, on completion of your Private phase, the Skyborne Careers Team will work with you to discuss your options. If a Part 121 airline is not where you wish to take your flying journey, then we have other career options such as Part 135, Part 91 or career flight instructor opportunities.



## THE JOURNEY

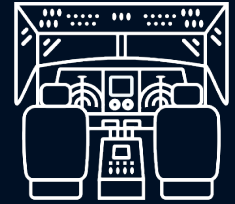


### COMPLETE A PRIVATE PILOT CERTIFICATE

The first step in becoming a commercial pilot is to earn a Private Pilot certificate. Starting in a single-engine airplane, this stage of training focuses on the fundamentals and sets the foundation for more advanced certificates and ratings. Private pilot applicants must be at least 17 years old and be able to read, speak, write and understand English. In addition, you must complete the necessary ground and flight training requirements as required by the federal aviation regulations.

### ADD INSTRUMENT RATING

After becoming a private pilot, the next step is to earn an instrument rating which allows a pilot to fly under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) and in all kinds of weather.

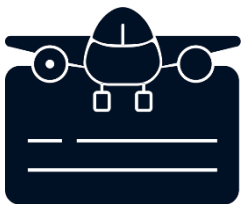


### COMPLETE A COMMERCIAL PILOT CERTIFICATE

Next is earning a Commercial Pilot certificate. Pilots must meet specific experience requirements and fly to a higher standard in order to become commercial pilots, which ultimately allows them to legally be paid to fly. Commercial pilot and flight instructor applicants must be at least 18 years old, and as previous certificates require, must also be able to read, speak, write and understand English.

### ADD MULTI-ENGINE RATING

To fly large passenger airliners, pilots must add multi-engine privileges to their pilot certificate. Adding a Multi-Engine rating to the Commercial Pilot certificate is the final step before building experience to meet hiring minimums.



### COMPLETE A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE

Becoming a Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI) allows pilots to earn a living flying, while they earn the flight experience required by the airlines.

### GAIN EXPERIENCE

Flight instruct to gain the type of quality and relevant flight experience necessary to meet the requirements of the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate. Most ATP applicants must be 23 years old, but certain pilots may obtain a restricted ATP certificate at age 21.



### AIRLINE PILOT POSITION

Upon meeting the requirements of the ATP certificate, you will meet the hiring minimums of most regional airline pilot jobs.

# FINANCE

Once you have decided that a career as a professional pilot is your destiny, one of the initial challenges is financing your training.

Average training costs are currently around \$78,000 - \$90,000 USD. There are flexible options to include or exclude onsite accommodation depending on your situation, as well as bolt on options for non-essential equipment. All training is included in the price through to Private. There are CFI scholarship opportunities available with Skyborne Airline Academy. Speak to a member of the Skyborne Careers Team to discuss our scholarship scheme.

Unless you are fortunate enough to have access to significant funds, you will need to obtain some form of financing. Skyborne Airline Academy is working with a number of institutions to provide a range of funding options.

## Sallie Mae Student Loans

Skyborne trainees may now apply to receive funding up to the full amount of their flight training through the Sallie Mae Training Smart Options student loans. Through this scheme you can pay for all your eligible professional training and trade certificate course expenses for an entire year. When it comes to how you'll pay back your loan, you're in control. You choose your type of interest rate, and the repayment option that works for you. The choices you make will affect how much your loan will cost you in the long run.

For full details relating to eligibility and to apply, please click on the link below.



[Sallie Mae - Student Loans](#)

## Meritize

Meritize use your previous academic or military achievements to enhance your credit evaluation and potentially improve your loan options. You may apply for funding up to the full amount of flight training and in some cases, cost of living. Meritize can offer unsecured funding, with no co-sign requirement for eligible candidates. You can fill out a short application to check your loan options without impacting your credit score.

For full details relating to eligibility and to apply, please click on the link below.



[Meritize - Training Funding](#)

# AIRLINE PAY AND BENEFITS

Flying is a satisfying and rewarding career, and airline pilots are paid very well. According to **The Occupational Outlook Handbook**, the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the “median annual wage for airline pilots, co-pilots, and flight engineers was \$160,970 in May 2020”. In addition to annual earnings, pilots take part in company health, life and disability insurance, as well as retirement plans. Pay for airline pilots depends on the airline, the airline type (regional or major), the pilot's experience level (pilot seniority), and the aircraft being flown.

It goes without saying - pilot salaries are at their lowest at the beginning of your career and highest towards the end. Before beginning your path towards a career as an airline pilot, it's important to understand how much you will be making throughout your entire career.



The figures above are based on averages across different airlines but can give you a good idea of the airline pilot salary you can be expecting as your career progresses. It's also worth noting that the timeline above is stretched out a little longer than some would experience.

With the current pilot shortage that North America is experiencing, some pilots have found the move from a regional airline to a major airline even faster.

For example, prior to Covid many regional airline pilots made it to the majors after only 3-5 years.



You probably noticed that at a couple of spots on the graph, pilot salaries drop, particularly when you jump from being a regional airline pilot to a pilot for a major airline. This does not necessarily mean you get a drop in pay.



# AIRLINE INDUSTRY GROWTH

New personnel demand is calculated based on a 20-year fleet forecast for commercial aviation aircraft with more than 30 seats. By analyzing fleet growth, aircraft utilization, attrition rates and regional differences in crewing specific to aircraft type, Boeing's Pilot and Technician Outlook estimates the number of new pilots.

\*612,000 new pilots needed globally over next 20 years with 432,000 being in North America.

Airbus predicts similar number of new pilots. The services market is rebounding, triggering a need for some \*\*550,000 new pilots and 710,000 highly skilled technicians over the next 20 years.

\*Source Boeing Pilot Technician outlook by region 2021 - 2040.

\*\*Source Airbus Global Market Forecast 2021-2040

So, in summary the OEM's are predicting approximately 21,000 new pilots per year required for North America alone.



# AIRLINE PILOT FAQ'S

## WHAT DOES PART 141 MEAN?

When choosing a flight school aviation trainees can choose from two types of flight training schools – Part 61 flight instruction or a Part 141 flight school. While both types of flight instruction are perfectly legitimate methods of pilot training, there are advantages to receiving flight instruction from a Part 141 flight school.

To better understand the two different types of flight training methods, it is helpful to determine exactly what these terms mean.

The term “part” in this case refers to a part of the Federal Aviation Regulations, or FARs. The FARs outline requirements for pilots, flight schools, maintenance requirements, and many other aviation-related topics.

Part 61 of the FARs is all about the regulations for pilot certification. It outlines the topics covered during flight training and the amount of flight hours required to obtain specific flight certificates. Part 141 describes regulations for flight training institutions and flight schools. Under Part 141, a flight school must seek and maintain FAA approval for its training curriculum, syllabus and lesson plans, creating a more structured flight training environment. A Part 61 training environment is less rigid and leaves an instructor with more flexibility to change the training program as they see fit. Both training programs teach to the same FAA practical test standards.

The main advantage to training with a Part 141 flight school is that good students can progress quickly. Under Part 141 trainees can gain certificates with fewer hours in the airplane. For example, a private pilot certificate requires 40 flight hours under Part 61, but only 35 hours under Part 141. In addition, the commercial pilot certificate can be accomplished in just 190 flight hours at a Part 141 school, as opposed to 250 hours under Part 61.

Part 141 flight schools have a strictly defined training environment. These flight programs are typically created for the career-minded pilot and offer a curriculum geared toward professionals. While both Part 61 and Part 141 are policed by same FAA standards, a Part 141 environment can operate more efficiently while training pilots toward a specific career path. This is the route that Skyborne follows.

The FAA reviews Part 141 curriculum on a regular basis, checking for consistency, continuity and acceptable flight training practices.

Finally, the Part 141 training environment can be very fast-paced. Learning takes place quickly, and trainees must study consistently and effectively. But it also means that trainees at a Part 141 training school will see results and earn pilot certificates quickly, too.





## *HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO TRAIN TO BE AN AIRLINE PILOT?*

If you commence a full-time course of training with Skyborne the course will take 52 weeks to complete which will then provide you with the qualification of a Certified Flight Instructor. If you then become an Instructor with Skyborne and build up the 1500hrs that are required to fly for the airlines this will take up to 2 years to complete. So in summary within 3 years of commencing pilot training you would have the qualifications and hours to commence employment with an airline in the US.

## *WHAT SUBJECTS SHOULD I STUDY TO BECOME AN AIRLINE PILOT?*

Unlike medicine or the sciences, there are no college academic courses that focus specifically on operating aircraft. However, having an extensive background in science and math can be beneficial to aspiring commercial pilots. It may also be advantageous to study geography and languages to increase your chances of employment. Knowledge of these subjects may give you an advantage over the competition when vying for commercial pilot positions, but not essential.

## *IS IT CHALLENGING TO BECOME AN AIRLINE PILOT?*

Working as a commercial pilot requires a great deal of technical knowledge. However, many professional pilots would say that the most challenging part of the job is being responsible for the aircraft, crew and passengers.

Becoming a commercial airline pilot requires considerable study and training, as well as many hours of flying time. It requires a lot of dedication, commitment and hard work to become a commercial pilot, but can be a very rewarding career path for anyone who loves travel and enjoys a challenge.

## *AM I TOO OLD TO START FLIGHT TRAINING?*

In short - if you're under 65 then no you're not too old, but the older you start your training, the more limited your employment options may be and the less money you can expect in return over the course of your career.

## *HOW MANY HOURS DO AIRLINE PILOTS WORK PER WEEK/MONTH/YEAR?*

It varies around the world, but in general pilots are limited to between 900 and 1,000 hours a year. The number of hours you fly can vary significantly between airlines.

Pilots usually get between 9 and 15 days off a month with long haul pilots normally requiring more time off to recover from large time zone changes and deep night flights.

## *WHAT IS A TYPE RATING?*

A Type Rating is a qualification to fly a specific type of aircraft. Any aircraft which has a maximum takeoff weight of more than 5,700 kgs, or is turbine powered requires a type rating to operate it.

A type rating course consists of a technical ground school course covering the aircraft's systems and performance and a simulator course, where you learn to fly the aircraft in normal and emergency situations for approximately 40 hours.

A type rating normally takes between 1 - 3 months to complete depending on your experience level and type of aircraft.

## *WHAT IS LINE TRAINING?*

Line training, or Initial Operating Experience (IOE) as it is sometimes referred to, is an advanced stage of pilot training which takes place on the aircraft for which you have acquired the type rating. It takes place with passengers onboard whilst being supervised and trained by a 'Training Captain'.

The Training Captain is a specially selected qualified Captain who is there to provide training to the trainee whilst when making the step from the simulator to real life, flying the aircraft during normal revenue operations.

This phase of training is designed to get the trainee up to speed with the normal operation of the aircraft on a daily basis, ensuring the student is familiar with company Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), flight profiles, manual and automatic handling whilst within a real-life commercial environment.

Line training for new pilots lasts anywhere from between 40 and 100 sectors (number of flights) which can take 2 - 12 weeks.





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