



SKY-HIGH OPTIONS FOR FLYING CAREERS

Once you've earned your private pilot certificate, you can begin the process of building hours and gaining additional certificates and ratings. At a minimum, you will need to earn a commercial pilot certificate and an instrument rating that enables you to operate an aircraft in clouds and different weather conditions. Airlines also require a multi-engine (twin engine) rating as well.

Then you'll need to decide on the type of career flying you want to do. Some jobs require less hours and experience. Those who dream of flying for the airlines, however, should keep in mind that the FAA now requires airline first officers (co-pilots) to hold an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate and a minimum of 1,500 hours total time as a pilot (with some **exceptions**.)

TYPE OF CAREER	RATINGS REQUIRED	AVERAGE COST	TIME	AVERAGE SALARY
CFI	Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI) and Commercial Pilot Certificate	\$12,000 (Commercial) \$10,000 (CFI)	6 months (3 months each)	\$38,000/year
Corporate/Charter	Commercial Pilot	\$12,000	3	\$93,000/year

	Certificate; Type Rating for large or jet-powered aircraft	(Commercial)	months	for corporate jet pilot
Airlines	ATP (Instrument and multi-engine rating are included in this)	Typically completed during initial training with an airline	3 months	\$120,000/year


With more hours and ratings, however, additional career opportunities will be available to you, including:

Certificated Flight Instructor

A certificated flight instructor (CFI) is authorized by the FAA to instruct student pilots and pilots taking recurrent training or preparing for additional certificates or ratings. They also may give flight reviews and recommend their students for flight tests. CFIs must be at least 18 years old and hold at least a commercial pilot certificate and instrument rating. CFIs can earn a special instrument instructor rating, allowing them to teach instrument flying (operating an aircraft by using cockpit instruments without visual reference to the ground). An instructor with this rating is called a CFII. In addition to undergoing their normal flight review every 24 months, CFIs must renew their instructor certification every 24 months by completing refresher training. Many CFIs build their hours getting paid to teach other people to fly.

Commercial Pilot

Commercial pilots can be paid to fly aircraft. They must be at least 18 years old and have a minimum of 250 hours of flight time (190 hours under the accelerated curriculum defined in FAR Part 141, including 100 hours in powered aircraft, 50 hours in airplanes and 100 hours as pilot in command, of which 50 hours must be cross-country flight time). They must hold an instrument rating or be restricted to flying for



hire only in daylight, under visual flight rules (VFR), within 50 miles of the originating airport.

Airline Transport Pilots

Airline transport pilots (ATPs) must be at least 23 years old and have a minimum of 1,500 hours of flight time, including 500 hours of cross-country flight time, 100 hours of night flying and 75 hours in actual or simulated instrument flight conditions (with some **exceptions**.) ATPs also must have a commercial certificate and an instrument rating. ATPs may instruct other pilots in air transportation service in aircraft in which the ATP is rated. They may not instruct pilots outside of air transportation service unless they also have an appropriate flight instructor certificate.

ATPs are required to meet the criteria of the stringent Class I medical, which they must renew every six months. They must revalidate their certificates every 24 months with a flight review. Most active ATPs undergo a checkride in an aircraft or simulator every six months.


Designated Examiner

FAA designated pilot examiners (DPE) are appointed by the regional FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and typically have decades of real-world experience and perform the majority of FAA checkrides or flight tests for everyone from new pilots to seasoned airline captains.

Air Freight pilots fly everything from small general aviation aircraft to large cargo carriers. Whether moving important documents, critical machinery parts to manufacturers trying to avoid costly equipment downtime or temperature-sensitive medications, many pilots build their professional experience working for air freight companies.

Agricultural pilots, who may be better known as crop dusters, play an integral role in assisting farmers and local governments in pest and weed control by flying at low-altitude in small one- or two-seat propeller aircraft.

Certified Flight Instructors (CFIs) teach flying to new, rusty and even veteran pilots



who wish to hone their skills. They typically teach at flight schools, aviation colleges, or on their own.

Charter and air taxi pilots are hired to fly people to specific destinations. The passengers (often groups of people) are essentially "renting" the plane and the pilots' services rather than using scheduled airlines. Some charter airlines fly jumbo jets, others operate private jets and others employ small single- or twin-engine aircraft.

Corporate and business

pilots typically fly aircraft such as Learjets, Gulfstreams and turboprops for corporations and businesses. Some pilots are employees of the business, while others are contractors who work independently. The recent growth in fractional jet ownership has made this a growing field.


If time, money, or perhaps medical issues prevent you from a paying flying career, you can still fly privately in planes, gliders, balloons, seaplanes and others. Check out our Flying for Fun web portal to see all of the ways you can still pursue your love of aviation.

Government service pilots fly a variety of different aircraft for many different federal agencies, including the FAA, Homeland Security, the U.S. Forest Service (firefighting) and the U.S. Postal Service, to name just a few.

Law enforcement pilots use planes and helicopters to support on-the-ground local, state and federal public safety organizations, including police, sheriffs and state patrol departments.

Major passenger and cargo airline pilots must hold thousands of hours of flight time and typically fly jets manufactured by Boeing or Airbus, such as the B-787, B-777, B-737 and the A-319 and A-380.

Medical and air ambulance pilots typically fly helicopters in extreme medical



emergencies to transport accident victims to the hospital quickly or to rush urgent organ transplant deliveries to awaiting patients.

Military pilots serve in various capacities, from hauling cargo and soldiers to all corners of the globe to refueling aircraft in mid-air to training new pilots. They fly everything from agile supersonic F-16 fighter jets to C-130 turboprops, and Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters.

Regional airline pilots typically fly what the industry refers to as RJs—regional jets. These are smaller aircraft that typically accommodate from 32 to 100 passengers. RJs usually serve smaller airports to support major airlines' hub-and-spoke networks. The Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) **Air Line Pilot Careers** offers lots of practical information for those interested in flying for regional airlines as a stepping stone to a career with the major airlines.