

How to Turn Your Dream of Flying **Into Reality**

...on Any Schedule and Without Breaking the Bank!

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Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Your Basic Pilot Certificate	3
Chapter 2: Five Steps to a Basic Pilot Certificate	7
Chapter 3: How Do I Get Started Now?	12
Chapter 4: Can I Earn a Living Flying?	15
Chapter 5: Should I Buy an Airplane?	16
Chapter 6. How to Fly with Randy	18
Bonus Appendix 1: Learn to Fly Checklist	19
Bonus Appendix 2: Additional Certificates and Ratings.....	20

Introduction

If you're like most people considering first-time flying lessons, you've probably dreamed of doing this since you were a kid.

I talk to people every day who have spent years longing to experience the thrill that comes from sitting in the pilot's seat, hands on the controls, the world dropping away and their horizons expanding with every passing moment.

But learning to fly doesn't have to be a distant dream. You can do it, faster and more affordably than you probably think, with the right blend of motivation, equipment, and instruction.

This ebook will teach you the ins and outs of getting your own basic pilot certificate, including requirements, timeline, budgetary considerations, and a solid look at whether or not you should purchase your own plane.

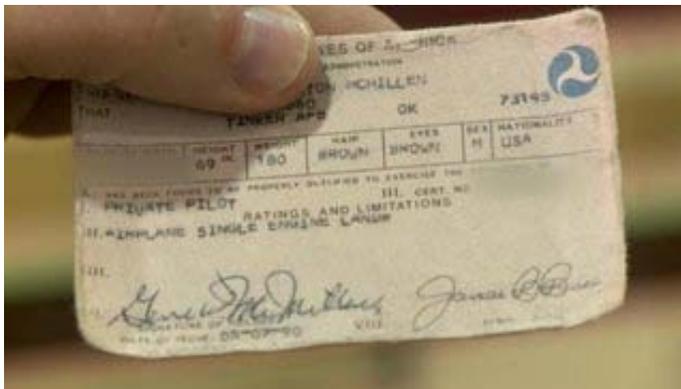
Are you ready to let your dream take flight?

Then let's begin...

Chapter 1: Your Basic Pilot Certificate

Whether you want to learn to fly for work or recreation, chances are good that one thing you'll love is the *freedom*. With your basic pilot certificate (what most call a "pilot's license"), you'll be able to access that freedom anytime. You can use your plane for business, adding enjoyment to your career and getting to and from meetings in much less time; or you can fly just for fun, taking trips across the region or even internationally.

What Can I Do with a Basic Pilot Certificate?



Your basic pilot certificate allows you to fly single-engine aircraft weighing less than 12,500 pounds. You can carry passengers, though not for hire (you may, however, share the cost of a flight with your passengers). With additional training, you can be certified to fly in the clouds, charge fees to carry passengers or freight, and fly even larger aircraft.

Initially, most new pilots use their skills to take family and friends sightseeing. You can make day trips to fun, relatively local airports (there are over 400 in Minnesota alone!) and explore little-known areas close to home. Many airports offer camping, and some are located near national parks and other scenic recreation areas. What's more, every year there are many "fly-ins," or air shows, where you can meet and greet with other pilots!

The granddaddy of all fly-ins is AirVenture, held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in late July of each year. You can stay for the entire week and visit vendor exhibits, listen to excellent presentations from well-known aviation speakers, and watch the daily air show. My favorite AirVenture feature is the seaplane base. Nestled in a secluded lagoon, you can view more than 100 seaplanes and talk with pilots through the night about their adventures on the water and in the air. For more information and a gallery of pictures, visit <http://www.oshkoshseaplanebase.com/>.

Check out our website for more fun places to go in the region: <http://airtreknorth.com/fun-places.html>.

And then, once you get more experience under your belt, there's nothing to stop you from flying across the country, up to Canada, or across the water to the Bahamas! Every February, I fly down to Florida for the Daytona 500. There, I'll make run down to the Keys, or over to St. Pete's beach along the coast, or maybe the everglades for lunch. And Florida isn't quite complete without a few days in a seaplane, eating in Tiki hut themed restaurants that extend out into the water from a sugar sand beach!

What Type of Planes Can I Fly?

You may not be able to fly the Space Shuttle on your first solo, but with a basic pilot certificate, you'll be legal to fly some pretty sophisticated machines.

Here are the general guidelines:

- Single-engine aircraft weighing under 12,500 pounds
- Fixed gear (doesn't retract up into the belly of the airplane)
- Engine at 200hp or less.



If you want to upgrade to an airplane that has retractable gear, a tailwheel, two engines, or a seaplane, it's just a few more hours of training and in some cases a short flight test also.

The most popular training aircraft is a four-seat Cessna 172 (pictured left). Other popular training aircraft are made by Piper and Beechcraft. You'll want to stick with the type of plane you trained in at first, but once you earn your certificate, you can fly any single-engine aircraft that meets the above characteristics.

How Far Can I Fly?

Two factors will determine the length of your trips, at least at first:

1. Fuel capacity
2. Weather systems

The Cessna 172 or Piper Warrior travel at around 115 knots (130 MPH) and can safely fly around 3½- 4 hours before you have to stop to refuel. That means you could fly about 365-420 nautical miles (or 420-480 statute miles) on a single tank of gas.

Some faster single-engine aircraft can go as far as 1000 miles on a tank of gas. However, at those distances, you'll probably find yourself crossing multiple weather systems. Until you have an instrument rating that allows you to fly in the clouds, you'll be somewhat limited by weather conditions.

How Safe Is Flying?



Flying commercial aircraft – for example, passenger or cargo jets – is extremely safe. With two pilot crews, and the ability to climb above most weather, the airlines have improved their safety record to the point where you'd have to fly for about a million hours – in other words, be in the air non-stop for the next 114 years – before you're likely to have an accident. And even then, with 24 accidents in 2007, the airlines had zero fatalities!

Smaller planes, on the other hand, are as safe as the pilots flying them. They *do* have more accidents than the airlines, but a full 80% of these accidents are a direct result of poor decision-making on the part of the pilot. You can eliminate most of the risk by getting the best possible training, exercising good judgment, and making conservative decisions when you fly. This may mean that there will be times when you decide not to fly, or land at an airport short of your destination, based on careful evaluation of the risks. Those risks typically are weather related.

Most studies conclude there's greater risk in driving a car than flying. There's a common misconception that whenever there's a problem with an airplane, it always results in a serious accident. But in truth, **about 75% of all airplane accidents result in minor or no injuries.** In the unlikely event that an engine fails, all of the controls will still work, allowing the airplane to be flown like a glider, so that you can land in a field or other safe location.

Another misconception is that mid-air collisions are frequent, and always fatal. Yet even though pilots fly millions of hours per year, there are only about a dozen mid-air collisions annually, and half the pilots involved usually survive. Ultimately, pilots have a great deal of control over how safe they are in the air.

In order to mitigate risk, you'll need to commit to continuous learning throughout your flying career. Two organizations offer free online safety courses and host local safety seminars nationwide: the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's Air Safety Foundation (www.aopa.org), and the FAA (www.faa.gov). You can register on their websites to be notified by email

about seminars in your local area. Most of the seminars I do are free and often sponsored by the FAA Safety Team.

Can I Really Do it?

Many people assume that flying demands the education and physical conditioning of a jet fighter pilot. Nothing could be further from the truth! Average people *can* learn to fly. In fact, it's fun to experience the respect that a pilot certificate commands.

Most people are capable of learning the basic physical and mechanical skills required to operate the controls of an airplane. Remember: during World War II, tens of thousands of pilots completed their training in just a few months.

While most people can learn to fly, a small percentage lack the mature judgment to make good decisions during flight. If you're someone who enjoys a wild and crazy reputation in your everyday life, stick to bungee jumping. Flying requires a commitment to safety and conservative judgment.

Learning to fly will require a high level of involvement – don't expect to show up at the airport and learn through osmosis or casual observation. Flying is a hands-on endeavor that will engage your body and brain, so you must be an "active learner."

Probably the best predictors of whether you'll successfully complete flight training and earn a pilot certificate are:

- You want to do it.
- You have the time and funds.
- You have the drive and enthusiasm.

Flying is fun, so what's stopping you? Because I'm around pilots constantly, I always hear stories of how people learned to fly. And the most common regret pilots have is that they wish they had learned to fly much, much sooner! For me, it's the gleaming eyes after a student's first solo or that huge day when they pass their flight test that keeps me going as an instructor. There's nothing like celebrating with a student when they pass one of these exciting milestones.

Chapter 2: Five Steps to a Basic Pilot Certificate

There are five major steps you need to complete in order to acquire your basic pilot certificate. This chapter will cover them in-depth, so that you know exactly what to expect. (At the end of this e-book, you'll find a detailed checklist of steps that you can follow in order.)

Step 1. Meet Citizenship Requirements

As long as you are at least 16-years-old, the citizenship requirement is the only prerequisite you need to fulfill before you begin flight training.

For U.S. Citizens



As of October 2004, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced that student pilots must show proof of citizenship before they begin flight training. To meet this requirement, you'll need a birth certificate or passport. Your flight instructor will record that they've seen it. You can then immediately start flight training.

For Non-US. Citizens

If you're not a U.S. citizen, you are required to apply to the TSA for approval. To do so, create an account online at www.flightschoolcandidates.gov and specify your flight school or instructor as the "training provider." For more details of the TSA rules, visit http://aopa.org/tsa_rule.

Step 2. Enroll in Required Flight Training



Flight instruction involves both on-the-ground, classroom-type learning, and in-the-air, hands-on training. Here are the training requirements you'll need to meet in order to earn your pilot's license:

1. Ground Instruction. Ground instruction involves detailed training from your instructor or through a home study course on over a dozen topics specified by the FAA. This training must be documented in a pilot logbook that will be provided to you upon commencement of your

training program. This ground instruction is in addition to any study you do in preparation for the knowledge test, a written examination required by the FAA (see step 4).

2. 20 hours of Dual Instruction. Dual instruction is one-on-one training with you and your instructor in the airplane. In order to be licensed, you need:

- Three hours of cross-country flight to airports more than 50 miles away
- Three hours of flight solely by reference to instruments
- Three hours of night flight and 10 night take-offs and landings
- Three hours of instruction within 60 days prior to your practical test

3. 10 hours of solo flight. This includes: five hours of cross-country training, including a 150-nautical mile round trip, and three takeoffs and landings at an airfield with a control tower.

Step 3. Medical Examination



When you're ready to fly an airplane by yourself for the first time (what is known as your first "solo"), you'll need to pass a third-class medical examination administered by an FAA-designated physician or Aviation Medical Examiner (AME). For your convenience, here's a link so you can find a list of local AMEs <http://www.faa.gov/pilots/amelocator/>

Some people worry about the medical. If you're in good health and don't take medications, there's no need for concern. If you have medical conditions, and are taking medications, talk with your physician before you meet with the AME to see if any adjustments in medication are necessary. The FAA has a long list of approved medications, so do your research and find the path that is best for you with the help of qualified professionals.

Step 4. Pass the FAA Knowledge Test

The FAA knowledge test is a multiple-choice written examination. In order to receive your private pilot's certification, you must pass with a score of 70% or better. You'll be asked 60 questions which have been selected at random from a pool of about 700 in the FAA question bank.

At Air Trek North, we make studying for the test as simple as possible. We've found that candidates do best when they receive hands-on flight training at the same time they're studying for the written test. This way, your study time is less memorization-intensive and more practical and visual.

You can take the written test anytime before your flight test; however, we recommend that you take it at least a month earlier, so you can focus the next month solely on preparing for your checkride. There are several study programs to help you make sure you pass the knowledge test with flying colors, including home study books and DVDs.

Below is a simple list of the books and tools that are helpful in studying for and passing the written test.

- Pilot logbook
- Pilot handbook
- FAR/AIM regulations guidebooks
- Sample tests
- Navigational plotter
- Flight calculator

Step 5. The Checkride

The final step is a practical flight test with a Designated Pilot Examiner. The standards for the checkride are defined by the FAA's Practical Test Standard (PTS). (Download a copy at http://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/airmen/test_standards/pilot/). The manual might seem like a mountain, but don't worry: we've designed flashcards and summaries to help make this part of the training much easier for you.

Often, before the checkride, you'll fly with a second flight instructor (someone other than your primary instructor) for a "phase check." This is a simulated checkride designed to spot any

deficiencies in your performance and help you prepare more fully for the actual test. It can also build your confidence to hear that two instructors feel you're ready for the checkride.

On the day of the checkride, you'll receive both an oral examination and an in-air flight test. When you pass, the examiner will issue you a temporary airman's certificate, which allows you to immediately begin exercising your new privileges (you get to fly as a real pilot!). A lot of work goes into getting a pilot certificate, so after the checkride, be sure to go out and celebrate your awesome achievement!

How Long Will it Take?

The amount of time it takes to earn a pilot's certificate varies widely. Here at Air Trek North, we recommend you fly at least two or three times per week to minimize costs and get your training done as quickly as possible. Using this approach, many of our students get their certifications in as little as two months. For those who can fly every day, a pilot certificate might only take two to three weeks. For those who fly less frequently -- say once every other weekend -- expect there to be some retraining each time you go up. And, of course, remember that some people learn faster than others.

Whatever your situation, don't be discouraged. We have students from across the board: kids in their teens and 20's, working professionals, and retired folks. As long as you're physically able to meet the FAA medical requirements, you can keep training as long as you need until you're ready to take and pass your examinations.

How Much Will it Cost to Meet All the Requirements?

Costs vary from location to location, so there's no "fixed cost" for flight instruction. Pricing usually depends on how many instruction hours you need (most people require more than the FAA minimum), the type of plane you learn in, and whether or not there are fuel surcharges.

Realistically, you should expect a private certificate to cost at least \$7,000 -- and perhaps over \$10,000 if you train in a new aircraft. If you're worried that you don't have enough money, see the next section; there are several scholarship and loan opportunities available for budding pilots.

In the end, just as with anything you choose to spend your money on, the real issue isn't what it costs -- but what it's worth to you. Flying can be very practical, and save you money over the

long-haul in terms of travel costs and time...but in the end, most people learn to fly for the same reason they choose any sport or hobby: because they're passionate about it, and because it's a whole lot of fun.

What if I Can't Afford it?



Price is certainly a factor in considering flight instruction, and in some cases it might be wise to save up until you have enough money to pay for the training you need. After all, if you start learning and run out of money, you'll ultimately spend more because you'll forget many skills and need to re-learn them!

There are other options, too. The Aviation Scholarship Directory (<http://www.avscholars.com/>) lists hundreds of scholarships available for pilots-in-training. You might also consider borrowing money to complete your certification. Do an internet search for “flight training loans” to find lenders. Wells Fargo is one lender you should include on your list of possibilities.

Be sure to choose the *best* (not *cheapest*) instructor you can afford. A good instructor will save you time and money – because you’ll learn more efficiently – even if they charge more per hour. Stay away from an instructor who is just out of school, or one that has aspirations of going into the airlines. On average, they have less time dealing with students and are unfamiliar with solid teaching methods. And, as I mentioned before, the most cost-effective way to learn is by flying once a week or more, especially in the early phase of your training. If you fly less than once a week, you’ll spend more total hours earning your certificate, because you’ll spend more time relearning what you forget between lessons.

Whatever you do, don’t give up on your dream of flying! Like thousands of pilots, you can find a way to make it happen. It truly is one of the most rewarding adventures to embark on.

Chapter 3: How Do I Get Started Now?

There are several steps you can take right now to make your dream of flying a reality. Here they are...

Step 1. Find a Flight School or Independent Flight Instructor



Look for a local flight school or qualified independent instructor. One great place to start is to head to the nearest airport and ask around.

Once you've identified a flight school and/or handful of private instructors, conduct interviews with them. Here are some questions to ask:

- What is your schedule and availability?
- Are you working toward a job with the airlines? (If so, the instructor may leave before you complete your training -- ask how they would transfer you to another instructor.)
- How many students have you sent for checkrides?
- How many hours is typical prior to the flight test?
- What is your training philosophy?

You're looking for someone whose teaching style matches your learning style, and with whom you feel comfortable. Once you make your decision, if you feel that things aren't working out after a few lessons, don't be afraid to address it. It's your money. You have a right to be satisfied with the service you're paying for.

Step 2. Schedule a Demo Flight

Before you make a decision to enroll in flight instruction, schedule a demo flight to be sure it's right for you!

Step 3. Decide Which Certification You Want to Pursue

Throughout this ebook, I've spoken at length about the private pilot certificate, but there are lesser certifications available. For example, the Sport Pilot certificate allows you to travel short distances in much smaller aircraft called Light Sport Aircraft (LSA). The restrictions are greater - for example, you can only fly during the day, may only transport one other passenger, and cannot fly in any airspace that requires radio communication -- but it might be an option for you if you are interested in piloting LSAs.

Step 4. Choose the Type of Aircraft You Want to Train In

For your private pilot certificate, you can train in most single-engine aircraft. However, one important decision you'll make is the age of your training aircraft. Because of FAA inspections, older aircraft are just as safe as newer aircraft -- and you'll find that older planes are less expensive. There are excellent advantages to using newer aircraft, however, including the latest electronics.

Consider looking for planes that are equipped with GPS technology. At Air Trek North, we train students to use the older equipment as required by FAA regulations, but we also equip all of our aircraft with GPS technology. GPS technology provides straight lines you can follow on cross country flights, improved terrain awareness, and advanced cloud navigation. I recommend that all pilots eventually train themselves to use GPS technology.



Is There Any Equipment I Need to Buy in Order to Get Started?

Nope!

You can show up to your first flight lesson with little more than a passport or birth certificate to establish your citizenship. Eventually, though, your instructor will probably recommend that you make a couple of purchases. Here are two things you might want to start considering:



Aviation Headset

Choose an aviation headset with Automatic Noise Reduction (ANR) technology. These headsets block low-frequency engine noise, which can be fatiguing to listen to for hours on end.

Renter's Insurance

Wherever you rent a plane, you'll probably have to agree to pay a substantial deductible for any damage that occurs during flight, even for events that are out of your control. Renter's insurance will mitigate your out-of-pocket costs for any damage. Two popular places to pick up renter's insurance are www.aopa.com and www.avemco.com. Get in touch with them and they can help you pick amounts and coverage.

Chapter 4: Can I Earn a Living Flying?



Sure!

Like any career, it all depends on your goals, how hard you're willing to work to achieve them, and whether you can make the necessary sacrifices along the way.

Of course, your basic certificate won't be enough to earn money -- you'll need additional certificates and ratings. Most aviation-related jobs require at least a commercial certificate. The following are entry-level jobs that allow you to build a resume of the hours necessary to pursue more lucrative career opportunities...

- Flying traffic watch for a local radio or television station
- Taking aerial photos or flying patrols over natural gas or oil pipelines
- Flying freight (often at night) in single- or twin-engine aircraft

The following jobs require more experience (often 1000 hours or more):

- Flying for a company's corporate aviation department
- Flying for a fractional (shared) jet ownership company
- Flying for a regional airline

You'll need even more experience (probably over 1200 hours) and a college degree to qualify for the following:

- Flying for a major airline
- Flying jets for a major freight company

You can also earn a living as a Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI). While many CFIs teach temporarily while they log flight hours to qualify for commercial airlines, there are also some flight instructors who make teaching a career (like me!). Recently, a shortage of CFIs has caused pay to rise. In many cases, CFIs earn more than copilots starting out at regional airlines.

Regardless of your goal, be sure to research your dream job to find out what experience is required and how much you'll be able to earn.

Chapter 5: Should I Buy an Airplane?

The answer to this question depends entirely on your goals and dreams.

Most pilots who fly primarily for fun don't purchase their own planes, but rent whenever they want to fly. However, if you plan on flying for business, or for more than just a weekend hobby, you might want to consider it.

Additionally, if you have a particular aircraft you want to pilot after you earn your certificate, purchasing one might be your best bet -- especially if the model isn't readily available for rent. In this case, you can actually train in the aircraft you plan to pilot! It might take you a little longer to get your certificate than in a standard training airplane...but in the end, you'll be far more knowledgeable and proficient in the airplane of your dreams.

Most people wait until they earn their pilot certificate before they decide to purchase a plane. Some join other pilots and share the cost of an airplane. Some owners reduce their costs by entering a "leaseback" agreement with a local flight school that rents the plane to other pilots.

What about Building My Own Plane?



Building an airplane is a major undertaking. Even if you buy a kit airplane, the FAA requirements dictate that you must perform at least 51% of the work. It's not unusual for people to spend 200 hours or more building an aircraft. In fact, the vast majority of builders spend more hours building the airplane than they ever will flying it. And a significant number never complete the project.

Still, if it's a dream of yours, go for it! The best resource for plane builders is the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA -- visit them online at www.eaa.org). In addition to an excellent magazine and website, the EAA has many local chapters where you can meet other like-minded people. Members can offer training and assistance while you build your airplane.

Chapter 6. How to Fly with Randy

I hope you've enjoyed this ebook! By now, you should have a sense for what it really takes to earn your pilot's license -- and if it's something you'd like to pursue, I'd love to help your dream take flight.

I'm a flight instructor at the Airlake Airport, located in Lakeville, MN, south of Minneapolis. I believe in making flight instruction fun, stress-free, and safe. When you fly with me, I'll make it a point to become familiar with your dreams and objectives. Then, together, we'll create a comprehensive plan that will allow you to reach your goals as safely and quickly as possible.

I'm an FAA Gold Seal Flight Instructor and don't have aspirations of flying corporate or for one of the major airlines. I get my joy out of helping others learn this fun and rewarding skill. Nothing beats seeing a student who just passed their flight test or solo'd for the first time. It's a rush that I truly can't describe -- one that I want you to experience.

Just imagine...

- No more airport delays...
- You control where to go and when to take off...
- More flexibility in your schedule and life...
- A new hobby or career in the great blue skies...
- Finally giving yourself the gift of flight -- after all, you deserve it!

Now, in this ebook, I told you to interview potential instructors before making your decision. And I stand by that recommendation! So give me a call and set up an interview. We can meet in person or over the phone. If I'm not the right instructor for you, no hard feelings -- it's enough for me to know that you're out there pursuing your flight goals.

Whatever you do, don't hesitate. Remember, the number one regret I hear from pilots across the country is that they wish they'd started *sooner!*

For more information on learning to fly, or to set up an interview, contact me directly at 952.594.1184 or better yet, send me an email at randy@airtreknorth.com.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Warm regards,

Randy Schoephoerster, Professional Flight Instructor
www.airtreknorth.com

Bonus Appendix 1: Learn to Fly Checklist

Here's a step-by-step checklist of everything you need to do in order to get your pilot certification!

	Task	Target Completion Date
	Identify flight school or independent flight instructor	
	Schedule demo flight	
	Complete TSA application (non-U.S. citizens)	
	Decide on Private or Sport Pilot Certificate	
	Choose training aircraft	
	Schedule first flight lesson	
	Schedule medical examination	
	Schedule FAA Knowledge Exam	
	Schedule Checkride	

Bonus Appendix 2: Additional Certificates and Ratings

After earning an initial pilot certificate, many pilots train for additional certificates and ratings. Pilots who plan to fly for a living have no choice, since pilots aren't allowed to engage in any commercial activities with only a Private certificate.

Here's a list of additional ratings and certifications available, including requirements above and beyond a basic private certificate...

Seaplane Rating -- allows a pilot to fly an airplane that can land on the water. Requirements include:

- A minimum of 3 hours of flight training
- Pass a practical test (oral and flight exam)

Instrument Rating -- allows a pilot to fly in the clouds (if you plan to fly cross-country, an instrument rating is pretty much a must-have). Requirements include:

- A minimum of 40 hours of instrument flight training
- Pass a knowledge test and a practical test

Commercial Certificate -- required for any pilot who wants to be compensated in any way for their services. Requirements include:

- At least 18 years old
- A minimum of 250 hours total flight time and 20 hours of flight training for the Commercial
- Pass a knowledge test and a practical test
- A third-class medical for the practical test, and a second class medical to exercise the privileges of the certificate

Multi-Engine Rating -- allows a pilot to control an aircraft with more than one engine. Requirements include:

- Hold at least a third-class medical certificate
- No minimum number of hours of flight training (though it typically takes 10 to 15 hours)
- Pass a practical test

Flight Instructor Certificate -- allows a pilot teach others how to fly. Requirements include:

- At least 18 years old
- Hold at least a commercial certificate and, to teach in airplanes, an instrument rating
- Pass two knowledge tests and a practical test

Airline Transport Certificate -- Often required to fly for the major airlines. Requirements include:

- At least 23 years old
- Hold a Commercial certificate and instrument rating
- A minimum of 1500 hours of flight time and 350 hours of pilot in command time
- Pass a knowledge test and a practical test
- A third-class medical for the practical test, and a first class medical to exercise the privileges of the certificate