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# **HOW TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL PILOT IN 18 MONTHS**

## 0. Introduction

The journey into the cockpit of an airliner or business jet aircraft is not easy, but it is definitely worth the effort. If you put in the time and effort, you will be rewarded with what many consider to be the most beautiful job in the world. Here are 15 essential steps that make up the path to many people's dream jobs.



## 1. Examination for a Class 1 Medical Certificate

The medical fitness of the pilot is one of the key prerequisites for flying. There are several types of medical certificates depending on the position and type of operation you will be operating in. In this case, the so-called Class 1 (or possibly, for a temporary period, Class 2) will be important for you. As long as you are flying with an instructor on board, you do not need any such certificate. However, you must hold at least a Class 2 for your first solo flight. You only need to hold a Class 1 to obtain a Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL). Although it is not absolutely necessary, we recommend that you go through this examination at the beginning of your journey to becoming a professional pilot. It would be a shame to start investing money in training only to find out later that your medical condition will not allow you to pursue this profession. In order to obtain a Class 1 medical certificate, you must pass an initial medical examination at an aeromedical center. The closest Aeromedical Centers are [The Institute of Aviation Medicine](#) in Prague or the [Wiener Privatlinik](#) in Wien.



If you choose [The Institute of Aviation Medicine](#), you must first apply for the issuance of a registration number on the Czech CAA website. This certificate can then be extended annually either at these two facilities or with aeromedical examiners, a list of which can be found on the Civil Aviation Authority's [website](#).

## 2. Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate of Aeronautical Mobile Service and ICAO English

According to the national legislation of the Czech Republic it is necessary to be a holder of a Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate of Aeronautical Mobile Service to operate aircraft radio stations. Although a restricted form of this certificate exists, we recommend you to get General certificate (VFL).



You must hold this licence on your first solo flight, which is usually after about 15 hours of training with an instructor. Schedule your exam in advance so that your certificate is issued by the Czech Telecommunication Office in time and your first solo and training will not be delayed. Ask our Planning Department in advance for help. It is possible to prepare for this exam by yourself, however, we recommend taking a preparation course to ensure the exam will be passed successfully.

## 3. ICAO English Examination

To communicate in English onboard, you will need to pass ICAO English Exam.

Training course: training for the ICAO English exam is not mandatory, but is recommended. You will be able to prepare for the exam, the instructor will guide you on what to focus on and you will have the opportunity to take a mock exam. It is then necessary to obtain ICAO Level 4, 5 or 6 when taking the exam. Levels 4, 5 and 6 entitle you to communicate in English in flight with no difference. The level you obtain determines when you have to extend its validity in the future.

Examinations: the examination takes about 30 minutes and includes a written test, a conversation with the examiner and listening. All with an aviation theme.

## 4. Training for the PPL(A) Private Pilot Licence

Holder's privileges: as a holder of a PPL(A) you may act as PIC or co-pilot of aircraft on non-commercial flights. You cannot be paid for flying, but you can take your own aircraft wherever you like or perhaps take family and

friends on a trip or holiday. You can fly to Salzburg to see Hangar Sieben, or just fly to Zell am See for lunch. It's up to you, for all these pleasures you are fully qualified as a PPL(A) holder.

Entry requirements: the aviation regulations do not impose any requirements for the commencement of this training. However, completion of the first solo flight requires having reached 16 years of age, obtaining a Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate of Aeronautical Mobile Service, ICAO English (if unable to communicate in Czech) and obtaining a Class 2 Medical Certificate. Yes, you already meet all of these requirements because we advised you at the beginning to go straight to the medical examination and to apply for the radio-telephony certificate and ICAO English in advance.

Training course: the PPL(A) training consists of theoretical instruction and 45 hours of practical flight instruction. You will learn how to operate the aircraft safely, recover unusual positions, land and take off, plan and complete the flight correctly, communicate properly and be prepared for various emergency situations. You will leave the course trained so that you can fly without an instructor and confidently take responsibility for others on board.

Examinations: To obtain this licence, you must pass a theoretical knowledge examination at the Civil Aviation Authority. The test consists of 120 questions for which the candidate chooses the correct answer from four possible answers. A 75% pass mark is required. Most of the test questions are publicly available and it is therefore possible to try to pass this test by mock test. You will then take a flight with an examiner who will verify the level of skills you have acquired during training.



**5. Fly about another 90 hours as a pilot in command ... solo / time building - alone, with family, with friends**

Since in a few months you will need to have flown a total of 100 hours as PIC as a CPL(A) applicant, you need to get started early. Where and with whom you fly is up to you. It is great experience to complete a few international

flights during your training and time building. As part of your time-building, we recommend that you take a practice flight with an instructor from time to time to continuously practice e.g. emergency procedures.

## 6. Night Training

Holder's privileges: after completing this training you will be fully qualified for VFR night flights. While it is possible to take a trip at night, PPL(A) holders usually prefer to fly during the day anyway. So most people only take this step because it is a requirement for their future profession. After completing the theoretical part of the course, you will have to do practical training, where you will learn to do in the dark what you can already do safely in the daylight. The 5-hour training includes both aircraft handling techniques training and navigation flight, and ends with a short solo flight without an instructor on board.

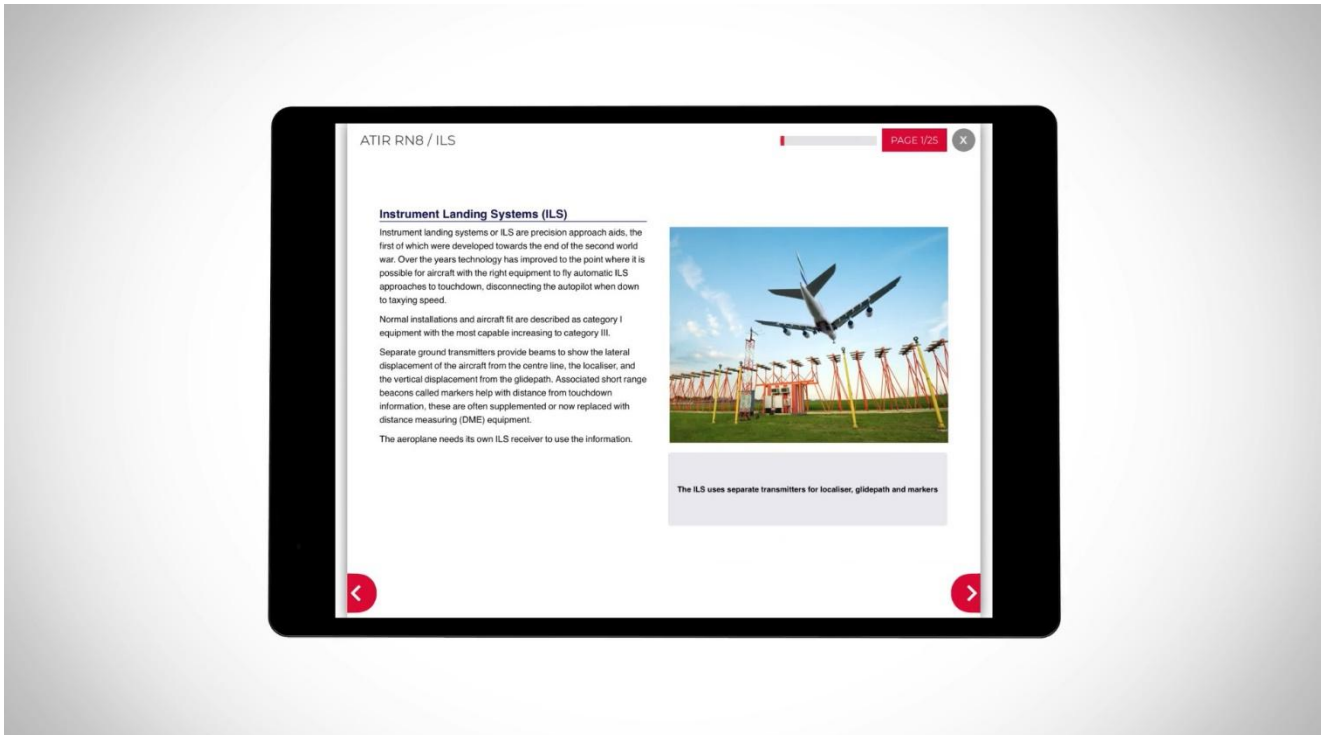
Examinations: There are no examinations to be taken after completing this training, you gain this qualification by successfully completing the course.



## 7. Theoretical ATPL(A) course

Your current theoretical training is fully sufficient to exercise the privileges of a PPL(A). You can already fly for fun, you can fly with your family or friends, but you are not yet ready to fly professionally. Because you want to graduate as an ATPL frozen and become a professional, you need to complete the appropriate theoretical training necessary to be a transport pilot. So it is time to start the ATPL(A) theory course. This includes 650 hours of study for PPL(A) holders. Legislation states that of these 650 hours, the student shall complete at least 10 per cent of the course with an instructor and up to 90 per cent can be spent on self-study. This is, of course, on the condition that he/she has the appropriate study materials from his/her flight school, that he/she studies regularly according to a schedule agreed with the flight school and that he/she completes tests to ensure continuous progress in training. Aviation regulations require a flight school to monitor the student's progress in this manner. On completion of each subject, the flight school will issue the student with a certificate entitling you to sit the Civil Aviation

Authority theory examinations. These examinations are taken electronically by selecting the correct answer from a set of examination questions. You need to pass at 75 per cent.



## 8. Instrument rating on single-engine aeroplanes IR(A) SE

**Holder's privileges:** this rating entitles you to fly under IFR rules. In other words, it entitles you to take off at visibility of, say, 400 m, immediately enter the cloud, fly in the cloud for, say, 4 hours without visual reference, and come out of the cloud again at 60 m above the runway where you land.

**Entry requirements:** You must have already done some instrument flying training to start. By holding a PPL(A), a night rating, having flown at least 50 hours of navigation as PIC and holding an ATPL(A) theoretical knowledge certificate, you meet the requirements of the regulations. Now all you have to do is complete that instrument flying training. :-)

**Training course:** the theory for IR rating is included in the ATPL(A) theory, so you already have that in your pocket. You need to complete the flight training, which consists of 50 hours split between the simulator and the aircraft. In this training you will develop the ability to fly solely according to what the instruments in the cockpit indicate. You will learn how to control the aircraft without external visual reference, learn how to use radio navigation, and learn how to deal with problems and emergencies, which are often more challenging when flying in cloud than when flying outside. You will learn how to depart in marginal visibility, fly flight paths, and execute all the necessary types of approaches so that when you leave the cloud you actually have the runway you want to land on in front of you.

**Examinations:** you do not have to take the theory test anymore, because you have completed the ATPL(A) theory exams. You will have a practical skill test with an examiner who will verify that you have mastered instrument flying as required by the legislation.



## 9. MEP Land training

**Privileges:** This rating entitles you to act as pilot in command of single-pilot multi-engine piston-engine aeroplanes.

**Entry requirements:** since you already have at least 70 hours in your logbook as a command pilot, you can start training for the MEP Land rating.

**Training course:** this training is not long, but it is very important. You will learn the principles of flying piston multi-engine aircraft. The training consists of 7 hours of theoretical training and 6 hours of practical training. For the most part, this training revolves around what and how a pilot should do when one of the engines fails.

**Examinations:** The training is completed by a skill test with an examiner to whom you will demonstrate that you are able to fly the multi-engine aircraft safely, handle engine failure and complete the flight safely with the engine not running.

## 10. Instrument rating on multi-engine aeroplanes IR(A) ME

**Holder's privileges:** this rating entitles you to fly a multi-engine aeroplane under IFR rules.

**Entry requirements:** Holders of IR(A) SE ratings who have already completed MEP Land training and skill test need only complete 5 hours of training to extend their single engine IR(A) rating to multi-engine aircraft.

**Training course:** In this training we do not learn to fly IFR rules anymore. We already know how to do that. Now you will learn how to fly IFR safely with a multi-engine aircraft that has, for example, lost power at a critical stage of flight.

Examinations: The training is completed with a skill test with an examiner, to whom you will demonstrate that you are able to fly the multi-engine aircraft safely under IFR rules, and you will be able to handle engine shutdown in clouds and complete the flight safely with the engine inoperative.



## 11. Commercial Pilot Training

Holder's privileges: as a holder of a CPL(A) you may act as pilot in command or co-pilot in commercial air transport. In other words, as a CPL(A) holder, you can make a living from flying and finally stop getting paid for it, but instead get paid for it forever.

Entry requirements: all the ratings you have obtained so far are entered in your PPL(A) license. You also meet the requirement of 150 hours total flight time including 50 hours as PIC. Now it's time to take a major step forward and convert your experience into a CPL(A) commercial pilot licence.

Training course: you have passed the theoretical exams again, so only the practical training applies to you.

Examinations: Before the skill test, the applicant must be 18 years of age or older and have completed at least 200 hours of total flight time and meet a number of other criteria. However, you have already confidently met all of these criteria in the previous 10 steps. A solid flight school will take care of this. In the skill test, you will demonstrate

to the examiner that you have mastered the correct piloting of the aircraft, that you can safely perform the specified flight in accordance with the flight rules, that you have acquired what is known as "airmanship", i.e. aeronautical skill, good aeronautical judgement and thinking, and that you can make full use of the theoretical knowledge you have acquired.



## 12. Advanced Upset Prevention and Recovery Training (A-UPRT)

The legislative requirement for this training only came into existence a few years ago. The aim of this course is to train the pilot to be able to cope even better with unusual attitudes, illusions or other hazardous situations in flight associated with possible loss of control of the aircraft. The training includes 5 hours of theory and 3 hours of practical training on an aerobatic aircraft.



## 13. MCC Multi-Crew Cooperation Course

This training includes a total of 25 hours of theoretical instruction and 20 hours of simulator training. The student will acquire knowledge and principles of operation in a multi-crew environment. It is often said with that 1+1 is more than 2, i.e. two well-trained pilots in accordance with MCC principles are more than two other pilots. And it is true. If the pilots were not trained to fly together, their cooperation would be very inefficient, which would be especially obvious during critical phases of flight and in emergency situations.

Examinations: this training does not end with any examination. The student will receive a certificate of successful completion of the training.

## 14. Pass the airline selection process

Now you are just one step closer to your goal. The months of study and training have been completed, you have passed all the necessary training modules and examinations. It hasn't been easy, but you have succeeded and you have done it. You hold a CPL(A) commercial pilot licence with an instrument rating for multi-engine aircraft. You have an MCC, you have an A-UPRT. You are what is known as ATPL Frozen. Now all that's left is to succeed in the airline's assessment for a co-pilot position on a transport aircraft or perhaps a business jet. And how to prepare for such a selection exercise? If you have trained at a solid flight school, you can rest easy because you are ready. A solid flight school can do more to ensure your acceptance, for example, organising seminars with

graduates who have successfully passed the selection process on what to do to increase your chances of acceptance.

**Our flight school is an official partner of the Czech airline Smartwings, one of the largest airlines in Europe.** Our cadet program meets the strict criteria set by Smartwings, and has been awarded three stars out of three in Smartwings' audit, which is an undeniable advantage of our graduates over students from other flight schools.



**15. Type training for the specific aircraft you will be flying for your employer**

To fly an airliner or a business jet, there is one last thing you need to do, and that is to complete type training specifically on the aircraft you will be flying with the airline. Anyone who wants to fly, for example, a Boeing 737, Airbus 320 or any bizjet needs to go through it. Some airlines pay for the type training of pilots who pass the selection process, for example, for a multi-year commitment, while other airlines accept pilots who pay for the type training themselves. The number of vacancies on the market and the number of pilots looking for work also play a large part. Now, after the Covid-19 pandemic, companies are short of pilots and are expected to be short for a long time to come. After all, a Boeing study says that by 2041, the airline industry will require over 600,000 newly trained professional pilots. This situation is certainly playing into the hands of graduates of flight training in terms of getting a job.



## And the price?

The cost of training may vary to some extent from school to school. Some schools often try to attract students with a seemingly lower price, but this often goes hand in hand with lower quality training, because what you save somewhere, the flight school has to save elsewhere. Unfortunately, some of the less solid schools also charge "unavoidable additional costs" that were not mentioned at the beginning and are not usually communicated to a student until the student asks why they are billed.

In general, the final price of the training is around EUR 60,000 including VAT and all fees. This investment will be returned to you relatively quickly after you get a job as a pilot. Moreover, the amount for training in a solid flight school does not need to be paid in advance, but gradually according to the hours flown. So you don't need to have the full amount ready on the day you start training.



## The following lines may also be of interest to your family

We understand that your decision to become a pilot is often influenced by people close to you. Since most of our students are just over 20 years old, it's often their parents who form that close circle—frequently offering support with the financial side of training. We want to assure them as well that we take our responsibility extremely seriously—not only our individual responsibility to each student and their family, but also our broader responsibility to society. Flight safety is our absolute priority, and we act accordingly. A student who we are not absolutely certain has the necessary skills to fly solo simply will not fly solo—until they reach the required standard. If there's ever any doubt about whether a planned training flight is safe to conduct (for example due to weather), we will never expose students—or ourselves—to unnecessary risk. We'd rather regret missing a flight that could have happened than regret taking off in unsuitable conditions. And if a student is struggling over time, we communicate this openly and in good time. Our goal is to either help them reach the required level of skills and knowledge or, if needed, support them in rationally considering whether the path of flight training is truly right for them.

## Finally...

Professional pilot training is not cheap and it is not for everyone. However, if you want to become a professional pilot and you have the possibility to finance the training, you will be rewarded with **an attractive, well-paid** job that will bring you a lot of **experience**, during which **you will see the world and** thanks to which **you will see other people and their uninteresting daily work literally far below you**. We look forward to working together!