**How To: Get A Private Pilot's License**

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For thousands of years, people have dreamt about flying. Many have tried, but it wasn't until the days of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk that Man was able to take flight.

For the past hundred years, airplanes have been made safer and easier to use, although the events of 9/11 have recently made the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) a tad more suspicious.

We are at a point now where human flight is open to just about everyone, even the likes of flyboys Tom Cruise and John Travolta. Accordingly, it's become painless for someone to get their private pilot's license.

By getting yours, you'll be able to take joy rides with your friends and family, take part in volunteer search and rescue missions, fly yourself to business meetings, and become an acrobat of the sky. Okay, maybe not. But here's how to get that precious license.

**requirements**

First of all, you must be at least 16 years old to get your student pilot certificate. You'll need to be 17 in order to receive the regular pilot's license. There's no age limit for you to fly, as long as you qualify medically.

You must be in great health. Everyone who wants to be a pilot needs to pass a medical exam in the early stages of the process. Blind people with narcolepsy don't usually make good pilots. More on this topic later.

Finally, you must have an adequate grasp of the English language, being able to read, speak and understand it perfectly (English is the international language used by all airports and control towers in the world).

**license**

Even though everyone refers to this piece of paper as a license, the technical term is, in fact, certificate. However, only the FAA calls it that.

Getting your private pilot's license will allow you to fly under certain restrictions. You'll be able to fly a single-engine airplane under visual flight rules (VFR) -- which means with a visibility of at least three miles -- as well as at night.

You may also be permitted to take passengers along, but you can't charge them for the ride, although you may split costs with them.

After you've received your private pilot's license, you'll be allowed to work your way up and get other certificates that will allow you to pilot commercial airlines or act as an instructor.

Furthermore, you can also get different ratings to add to your license. These ratings might allow you to fly multi-engine airplanes, navigate in bad weather, or fly different contraptions like helicopters, seaplanes, balloons, and gliders.

Now, here's how to get your flight license...

**getting your license**

Here are the steps you must take in order to learn to fly and get your license.

**Find a school**

The best way to get started is by visiting local general aviation airports, as they might have schools of their own. If not, they'll be in a position to recommend one. You can also find a database of licensed flight instructors at the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's website at [www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org).

[Note: Cypress College provides an accredited ground school, which provides ground school training and flight training devices for low rates and college credit]

**Sign up**

When you're ready, enroll at the school. Make sure that your instructor is the right person for you. Ask them about their aviation background and confirm that they're someone you'll be comfortable with. After all, you'll be spending many hours in their company.

Generally, instructors charge around $20/hour (US) for ground lessons and around $25/hour for practical flying lessons. Not too expensive, right? But you're also responsible for renting the plane, which can cost you anywhere between $40 and $75 an hour, depending on the type of plane.

If you take into consideration the entire training and licensing process, you should expect to pay about $5,000 total. But don't worry; most flight schools allow students to pay as they go.

**Get medically certified**

Before you begin the course, you need to be qualified as being in [good health](http://www.askmen.com/sports/foodcourt_60/91_eating_well.html) by an FAA-designated Airman Medical Examiner. To find such a doctor, ask your flight school for a recommendation or visit http://ame.cami.jccbi.gov for listings. This exam typically costs between $60 and $75.

After you've filled out a questionnaire, the doctor will test your equilibrium, nose, throat, hearing, and vision. Then, you'll be evaluated for any neurological or mental disorders such as psychosis, alcoholism and epilepsy.

Once you're issued your third-class airman medical certificate, it will be valid for three years if you're under 40 years old, and two years if you're older.

If you have a medical condition, you may still be able to fly, sometimes under certain conditions, but it's imperative that you disclose any and all information to the physician.

This medical certificate isn't mandatory for flight training, but you will need it when it comes time for you to fly solo, since it doubles as your student pilot license.

**Take the ground school course**

By and large, ground training lasts between three and five weeks. You will study flying regulations, aerodynamics, radio communications, navigation, airport operations, physiology, weather reports, aircraft systems, and weather theory.

While this knowledge will be tested in the final licensing step, it's also what constitutes the core of flying. You should therefore study very hard. It may someday mean the difference between a hard landing and crashing.

You can widen your pedagogical approach by taking advantage of the numerous manuals, computer programs, and videos available on the market. Just make sure your instructor approves them.

Now get up in the air and show 'em what you've got . . .

**Train in the air**

Practical training is an inherent part of learning. Over the course of your education, you'll fly between 30 and 40 hours with your instructor. Each lesson will take about two hours, although you'll often spend only one in the air, considering pre- and post-flight briefings.

Most students will actually complete around 70 hours of flight before finishing the program, making certain that they know the aircraft inside and out before going out on their own. There are some intensive training courses that can be completed in less than a month, but students generally take about five months to complete the training.

**Fly solo**

The last stage of your training consists of the instructor stepping off the plane and letting you fly by yourself. Once you do this successfully, you're ready to try out for your license.

**Take the written test**

The Federal Aviation Administration will let you know where to go to take the written test, which is actually administered on computers. This airman knowledge test will assess how well you remember what you learned during ground training.

For $70, you get two and half hours to answer 60 multiple-choice questions. In order to pass, you'll need to get at least 70% of the questions right. Once you pass, you have two years to take the practical test.

**Take the flight test**

The last phase of licensing is called the check ride . You'll meet an FAA examiner and he'll start by asking you questions vocally for one to two hours, once you've provided a written recommendation from your flight instructor. Then, you'll both climb aboard an aircraft and he'll see how you handle things in the air.

If the guy thinks you did a fantastic job, you'll be issued a temporary pilot certificate. Within a couple of months, the FAA will send you your permanent pilot's license in the mail.

**tips**

Here are some additional tips for you to consider if you're planning on getting your private pilot's license.

**Read your manuals**

An airplane is an expensive, dangerous machine. Piloting isn't the kind of thing you can learn on the fly, no pun intended. You won't have time to check your textbooks while you're in the cockpit. Make sure you're up to speed on all theoretical concepts before you climb aboard.

**Play games**

One of the best computer flight simulators is Microsoft Flight Simulator. It's extremely realistic and some pilots use it as an educational tool. Play it to stay sharp.

**Join the Civil Air Patrol**

The Civil Air Patrol is a volunteer organization that patrols the skies, providing disaster relief and performing search and rescue missions. Teenagers can also join the Cadet program to familiarize themselves with the world of aviation. While it doesn't substitute for proper flight training, much experience can be gained for less than $100 a year.

**Control your fear**

It's perfectly normal to be worried when flying a metal box 10,000 feet off the ground. However, you must realize that flying is one of the safest modes of transportation available, much safer than cars. The more confidence you acquire as a pilot, [the less nervous](http://www.askmen.com/fashion/body_and_mind/3_better_living.html) you'll feel.

**fly me to the moon...**

Getting your private pilot's license is a long, demanding and expensive process, but it's well worth the effort. If you follow every step, pay attention during training, and study diligently, everything will go smoothly. If anything, think about how impressed the ladies will be!

Resources:

[www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com/how_2464_private-pilots-license.html)

[www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov/)

[www.soyouwanna.com](http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/pilot/pilot.html)

[www.ecas.com](http://www.ecas.com/considering.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Air_Patrol)