

COMMERCIAL PILOT · AIRPLANE

# Commercial Quick-Review Guide

Professional-standard maneuvers, tighter tolerances, and the regulatory boundary between flying for yourself and flying for someone else — built element by element against FAA-S-ACS-7B.

**MODE 01****5-minute scan**

Tables, tolerances and the compensation-or-hire boundary. Find it, move on.

**MODE 02****30-minute review**

Work the diagrams and the maneuver breakdowns. Say the answers out loud.

**MODE 03****Oral prep**

Answer each DPE prompt before reading the model response.

**STANDARD**

FAA-S-ACS-7B, Commercial Pilot for Airplane Category — document dated November 2023, incorporated by reference into 14 CFR effective 31 MAY 2024

**SCOPE**

ASEL/AMEL knowledge, risk management and the professional-level decisions behind them. Complete on its own: currency, airworthiness, weather, airspace, airport operations, systems, navigation and human factors are each refreshed in compressed form, then the Commercial-specific standards are built on top. Seaplane Tasks identified, not treated in depth.

**REFERENCES**

FAA standards, regulations and handbooks.

**STUDY**

Review the key concepts, calculations and decisions. Practice explaining your answers clearly and applying them to a flight.

**How to use this guide**

Read the explanation, work the example, then answer the oral question before checking the response. Apply each topic to the airplane you fly. Use its current AFM/POH for speeds, limitations and procedures, and current regulations, charts and weather for flight decisions.

# Eligibility and aeronautical experience

The 250-hour minimum is a gate, not a target — and the composition of those hours is what examiners probe.

**DIRECT ANSWER – AERONAUTICAL EXPERIENCE, ASEL**  
**250 hours** total, including at least **100 hours as PIC** — 50 of which must be cross-country — and the training and solo/PIC time specified in 61.129(a). Age 18 minimum, English proficiency, and the knowledge and practical tests.

14 CFR 61.129(a); 61.123

| INSIDE THE 250 – THE PIECES THAT TRIP APPLICANTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 100 hr powered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 100 hours in powered aircraft, at least 50 in airplanes — 61.129(a)(1)                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 100 hr PIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | At least 50 in airplanes and 50 cross-country (at least 10 of the XC in airplanes) — 61.129(a)(2)                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 20 hr training                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | On the 61.127(b)(1) areas, containing the four blocks below plus <b>3 hours of test preparation</b> with an instructor in the 2 calendar months before the test — 61.129(a)(3)                                                                                                  |
| 10 hr instrument                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Using a view-limiting device — attitude instrument flying, partial panel, unusual-attitude recovery, intercepting and tracking navigation systems. <b>At least 5 of those 10 hours must be in a single-engine airplane</b> — the sub-requirement most logbooks miss — (a)(3)(i) |
| 10 hr complex / TAA / turbine                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Training in a complex airplane, a turbine-powered airplane, or a TAA meeting 61.129(j) — (a)(3)(ii)                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Two 2-hr XCs, dual                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | One by day and one by night, each in a single-engine airplane with a straight-line distance of more than 100 NM from departure — (a)(3)(iii)–(iv)                                                                                                                               |
| 10 hr solo / PIC duties                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Solo or PIC duties with instructor</b><br>10 hours in a single-engine airplane: 300 NM XC, 3 landing points, one at least 250 NM straight-line from original departure; plus 5 hours night VFR with 10 takeoffs and landings at an operating control tower.                  |
| 5 hr night VFR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Inside the same 10-hour solo/PIC block: 10 takeoffs and 10 landings, each landing involving a flight in the traffic pattern, <b>at an airport with an operating control tower</b> — (a)(4)(ii)                                                                                  |
| The <b>complex/TAA/turbine</b> requirement is the one Private applicants have never seen: 10 hours in an airplane with retractable gear and flaps and a controllable-pitch propeller (or a FADEC-equivalent), or in a turbine-powered airplane, or in a TAA meeting every element of 61.129(j) — see page 32. This shapes your training aircraft choice long before the checkride. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 14 CFR 61.129(a)(1)–(4), 61.129(j); 61.1 (complex, high-performance definitions)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| WHAT CHANGES FROM PRIVATE                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                       | the professional layer |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Standard                                                                                                                                                | Climb and approach airspeed tolerances tighten from +10/–5 kt to <b>±5 kt</b> ; touchdown windows tighten from 400/200 ft (Private) to <b>200/100 ft</b> (Commercial) |                        |
| Four performance maneuvers: chandelles, lazy eights, steep spirals and eights on pylons. Also prepare the power-off 180° landing and accelerated stall. |                                                                                                                                                                       |                        |
| Privileges                                                                                                                                              | Compensation-or-hire opens — with real conditions attached                                                                                                            |                        |
| Judgment                                                                                                                                                | ADM shifts from personal risk to <b>professional risk</b> — passengers or cargo who are paying, and the pressure that creates                                         |                        |

**MEDICAL FOR COMMERCIAL PRIVILEGES**  
Exercising commercial privileges requires at least a **second-class medical** — **BasicMed does not qualify you to act as PIC for compensation or hire**. Second-class duration: **12 calendar months** from the exam, then it reverts to third-class privileges through the normal third-class window.  
14 CFR 61.23(a)(2)(ii), 61.23(d)(2); 61.113(i) (BasicMed = private-pilot privileges only); ACS CA.I.A.K3

**DPE ORAL**  
**STRONG FIRST ANSWER**  
No — I'm short on two independent requirements: I need 10 hours complex/TAA/turbine and 50 hours cross-country PIC. Total time alone doesn't satisfy 61.129(a).  
  
A D D I F A S K E D I'd also confirm the 300 NM solo/PIC cross-country with a landing at least 250 NM from departure, the 2-hour night dual cross-country, and the 10 night landings at a towered airport, since those are frequently the other gaps in an otherwise-eligible logbook.

**CHECKRIDE TRAP**  
**"250 hours total, so I'm ready."** The regulation gates on *composition*, not just the total: 100 PIC, 50 cross-country PIC, 10 hours complex/TAA/turbine, the towered-airport night landings, the 3-hour test-prep window. An applicant can log 250 hours and still be short on two or three of these simultaneously.

**CHECKRIDE TRAP – THE SUB-REQUIREMENT INSIDE THE SUB-REQUIREMENT**  
Applicants who train 10 hours of instrument time entirely in a complex multiengine airplane, or entirely in a simulator context, often miss that **at least 5 of those 10 hours must specifically be in a single-engine airplane**. Ten hours total instrument training is necessary but not sufficient — the composition inside it matters as much as the composition of the 250.

# Professional dispatch judgment

The airworthiness rules (page 04) don't change with the certificate. What changes is who is relying on your judgment — and how much scrutiny a bad decision gets afterward.

The PIC must determine that the airplane is in condition for safe flight. Commercial work can add customer and schedule pressure; it does not make an unresolved defect acceptable.

14 CFR 3.5, 91.7; ACS CA.I.B.K1

## THE PROFESSIONAL DISPATCH QUESTIONS

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Documentation                      | Can you produce, on request, current airworthiness and registration, and explain exactly where the aircraft's inspection status stands — not "the annual is probably current"                                |
| Equipment list / KOEL              | The KOEL lists equipment by operation, such as day/night VFR, IFR or icing. Check today's operation; paid-flight rules apply separately.                                                                     |
| Deferred maintenance               | A history of deferred squawks is a pattern a professional pilot is expected to notice and act on, not just the one in front of you today                                                                     |
| Special airworthiness certificates | Experimental, light-sport and restricted-category aircraft have different operating limits. Paid carriage may be prohibited. Check the applicable rule and the aircraft's limits before accepting paid work. |

14 CFR 91.9, 91.203; ACS CA.I.B.K4

## SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

The owner/operator is responsible for maintaining airworthiness under 91.403. Separately, the PIC must determine the airplane is safe for flight and discontinue flight when an unairworthy condition occurs under 91.7. Neither responsibility cancels the other.

## INOPERATIVE EQUIPMENT – THE SAME PATH, HIGHER STAKES

The 91.213(d) process also applies to qualifying paid flights without an MEL. The KOEL's kinds of operation are day/night VFR, IFR and similar categories, not paid versus unpaid. Separately check rules such as 100-hour inspections and flotation equipment for applicable for-hire operations.

14 CFR 91.213(d); ACS CA.I.B.K3a–K3d

## PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Identical to Private: a pilot who owns or operates the aircraft may perform the Part 43 Appendix A(c) items, with the record entry. Commercial certification does not expand this list — a common misconception.

14 CFR 43.3(g); ACS CA.I.B.K2

## DPE ORAL

You're dispatching a rental airplane for a paid aerial-photo flight. The logbook shows a squawk deferred twice in the last month for the same item. Go?

## STRONG FIRST ANSWER

I stop and evaluate that pattern before I evaluate today's flight. Two deferrals of the same item is evidence of a developing problem, and as the pilot dispatching a paid flight I'm expected to notice that pattern, not just check today's box.

## ADD IF ASKED

Identify the item and check the equipment list/KOEL, regulations, ADs and deferral. Resolve uncertainty with maintenance before flight. Repeated discrepancies may indicate an unresolved problem.