

FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR · AIRPLANE

CFI

Quick-Review Guide

The certificate is not about flying better — it is about making someone else fly well, safely, and provably. Fundamentals of instructing, the endorsement and recordkeeping law, and the legal frame every instructor works inside — built element by element against FAA-S-ACS-25.

MODE 01

5-minute scan

The regulatory numbers, the endorsement chain, the learning-theory tables. Find it, move on.

MODE 02

30-minute review

Work the teaching-method comparisons and the lesson-plan anatomy. Say the answers out loud — you will be teaching them out loud.

MODE 03

Oral prep

Answer each evaluator prompt as an instructor would, before reading the model response.

STANDARD

FAA-S-ACS-25, Flight Instructor for Airplane Category — document dated November 2023, incorporated by reference into 14 CFR effective 31 MAY 2024. Element codes FI . <Area> . <Task> . <K/R/S> .

SOURCE SNAPSHOT

04 SEP 2026 — eCFR (Part 61 Subpart H at Amdt. 61-159; recent-experience rule Amdt. 61-155 in force since 01 DEC 2024), FAA-H-8083-9B, AC 61-65K (14 NOV 2025)

SCOPE

Initial flight instructor certificate, airplane single-engine. Fundamentals of instructing (Area I), the instructor's legal and recordkeeping frame (Areas II.J–K, III.A), teaching methodology and lesson design (Area IV), instructor responsibilities. Technical subjects (Area II) and the flight Tasks (Areas V–XIV) are covered as standalone teach-back pages with the Private standards transcribed; the Private and Commercial guides are optional depth, not prerequisites.

STATUS

Version 1.0. Technical and owner review: Javier Ramirez, CFI / CFII / MEI.

Use boundary. A review and oral-preparation reference for the instructor practical test. It does not replace the current regulations, the ACS, the Aviation Instructor's Handbook, AC 61-65, an approved AFM/POH or the judgment of the instructor who trained you. **Aircraft-specific speeds, configurations, checklist actions and the step-by-step conduct of stall, spin and emergency demonstrations come from your airplane's approved material and your own instructor — never from a study guide.** Where a claim depends on a source that could not be verified on the snapshot date, that boundary is stated on the page rather than filled in with a plausible number.

Eligibility: what 61.183 actually requires

Eleven paragraphs, two knowledge tests, one spin endorsement, and a 15-hour experience line most applicants have never heard of.

DIRECT ANSWER – ELIGIBILITY, AIRPLANE SINGLE-ENGINE

Be **18**; read, speak, write and understand English; hold a **commercial or ATP certificate** with an airplane category and single-engine class rating **and an instrument rating** (or instrument privileges) on it; pass the **fundamentals of instructing** knowledge test and the **flight instructor airplane** knowledge test; receive the FOI, areas-of-operation and **spin** endorsements; log at least **15 hours as PIC in airplanes, single-engine**; pass the practical test.

14 CFR 61.183(a)–(k)

61.183, PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH

(a)–(b)	Age 18; English
(c)	Commercial or ATP with the category/class of the instructor rating sought, plus an instrument rating or privileges for an airplane single-engine or multiengine instructor rating
(d)	Logbook endorsement from an authorized instructor on the fundamentals of instructing knowledge areas of 61.185(a)(1)
(e)	FOI knowledge test — not required of a holder of a flight or ground instructor certificate, a current state teacher's certificate authorizing teaching at 7th grade or higher, or a teacher employed at an accredited college or university
(f)	Knowledge test on the aeronautical knowledge areas of 61.185(a)(2)–(3) for the rating sought
(g)	Endorsement that you received the 61.187(b) areas-of-operation training and are prepared for the practical test
(h)	Pass the practical test in an aircraft representative of the rating (a simulator/FTD in an approved course is permitted)
(i)	Airplane and glider applicants: endorsement of instructional proficiency in stall awareness, spin entry, spins, and spin recovery , after training in those areas in an airplane or glider — and demonstrate that proficiency on the practical test
(j)	At least 15 hours as PIC in the category and class of aircraft appropriate to the rating sought
(k)	Comply with the rest of Subpart H

14 CFR 61.183; 61.185; 61.187(b)(1) (ASEL areas of operation)

WHAT THE PRACTICAL TEST IS MADE OF

FAA-S-ACS-25

Area I	Fundamentals of Instructing — six Tasks, evaluated by having you teach , not recite
Area II	Technical Subject Areas — sixteen Tasks; C (runway incursion) and K (endorsements and logbook entries) are always tested
Areas III–IV	Preflight preparation; the preflight maneuver lesson you deliver from a lesson plan
Areas V–XIV	The flight Tasks — flown to Commercial standards from the right seat while you explain, demonstrate, and diagnose

The instructor ACS uses one more element family than the pilot ACSs: **instructional knowledge**. You must be able to teach the element, name its common errors, and correct them — not merely perform it. Pages 04 and 13.

TWO TESTS, ONE ENDORSEMENT EACH

The **FOI** test covers learning theory, communication, teaching, assessment, planning and instructor responsibility — the material of pages 05–14. The **FIA** test covers the aeronautical knowledge of 61.185(a)(2)–(3). Each needs its own 61.183 endorsement — AC 61-65K carries separate templates for the FOI knowledge test and for the practical test; the FOI endorsement is a logbook entry of its own, not a line inside the practical-test endorsement.

14 CFR 61.183(d)–(f); 61.185(a); AC 61-65K

CHECKRIDE TRAP

"I have 250 commercial hours, so the 15-hour rule is automatic."

61.183(j) is *15 hours as PIC in the category and class of the rating sought*. A Commercial ASEL pilot has it. A pilot who earned Commercial AMEL and is now adding an airplane single-engine instructor rating must show 15 hours PIC in single-engine airplanes — and a CFI adding a multiengine instructor rating must show 15 hours PIC in multiengine airplanes, separately from 61.195(f)'s make-and-model requirement (page 02).

EVALUATOR ORAL

You are a new CFI without an instrument instructor rating. Which of the instrument training in Part 61 may you give?

STRONG FIRST ANSWER

The Private applicant's 3 hours of flight solely by reference to instruments (61.109) — that is not on the 61.195(c) list. What I may **not** give without the instrument rating on my *instructor* certificate is instrument training for an instrument rating, for a type rating not limited to VFR, or the instrument training **required for commercial and ATP certificates** — so a Commercial student's 10 hours under 61.129(a)(3)(i) need a CFII.

ADD IF ASKED

That Commercial clause was added by Amdt. 61-142 in 2018; many older study materials still say a CFI may give all Commercial instrument time. And in a multiengine airplane, 61.195(c)(2) requires the CFII rating for any of it. 61.183(c) is why every CFI holds an instrument rating on the *pilot* certificate — it is a prerequisite for the instructor certificate, separate from the CFII question.

Human behavior: needs, defense mechanisms, and the adult learner

Task I.A. The evaluator will describe a learner and ask what is going on. You answer with the vocabulary of the Aviation Instructor's Handbook and then with what you would do.

DIRECT ANSWER — WHY AN INSTRUCTOR STUDIES BEHAVIOR

Because **motivation is the dominant force in learning**, and motivation is driven by needs. An instructor who can read where a learner sits on the hierarchy of needs, recognize a defense mechanism for what it is, and adjust for how adults learn can change the outcome of a lesson; one who cannot will blame the learner.

FAA-H-8083-9B Ch. 2; ACS FI.I.A.K1-K3

HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDSMaslow, as the handbook presents it

Physiological	Food, rest, warmth, air — a hungry, dehydrated or exhausted learner is not learning
Security	Safety and freedom from threat — the learner who believes the airplane or the instructor is dangerous cannot attend to the lesson
Belonging	Acceptance, a place in the group — the reason a flight school's culture matters
Esteem	Competence, recognition — where praise and honest credit do their work
Cognitive and aesthetic	The need to know and understand, for order — the learner who asks "why"
Self-actualization	Realizing potential — the goal, and the reason people learn to fly at all

Lower needs dominate until satisfied. The instructor's job is to **remove the lower-level obstacle** before expecting learning: fix the fatigue, the fear, the sense of exclusion — then teach.

TEACHING THE ADULT LEARNER

Adults bring experience and want it respected; they need to know **why** before what; they are self-directed and resent being talked down to; they are problem-centred rather than subject-centred; and their motivation is mostly internal. Practically: explain the purpose first, connect new material to what they already do well, give them control of the pace where safety allows, and never embarrass them in front of others.

FAA-H-8083-9B Ch. 2; ACS FI.I.A.K3

DEFENSE MECHANISMS — RECOGNIZE, THEN RESPOND

Repression	Painful material pushed out of awareness — the learner "forgets" a frightening lesson
Denial	Refusing to accept a reality — "the landing was fine"
Compensation	Hiding a weakness by emphasizing a strength — the polished radio work that covers poor landings
Projection	Attributing one's own faults to others — "the controller confused me"
Rationalization	A plausible excuse in place of the real reason — "I didn't study because the test is easy"
Fantasy	Daydream substitutes for achievement
Displacement	Redirecting an emotion to a safer target — anger at the airplane, not at the mistake
Reaction formation	Behaving opposite to a felt but unacceptable feeling — bravado covering fear

Defense mechanisms are **normal** and mostly unconscious; they become a problem when they block learning. The instructor does not diagnose the learner — the instructor changes the situation so the mechanism is no longer needed: reduce the threat, restate the standard, give an honest path to success.

FAA-H-8083-9B Ch. 2; ACS FI.I.A.K2, S2

ANXIETY, STRESS, AND THE TWO KINDS OF REACTION

Normal reaction	Reasonable response to the situation: alertness, faster thinking, focus on the problem — the learner keeps flying the airplane
Abnormal reaction	Inappropriate response: extreme over-cooperation, rapid mood changes, marked or inappropriate anger, inability to follow simple instruction, "freezing" — the instructor takes over the decision-making , calmly, and ends the exercise if it persists

Anxiety is the most common obstacle to learning to fly. Its antidote is the learner's own **demonstrated ability**: build it in small, achievable steps and name each success.

EVALUATOR ORAL

A learner who flew well for ten lessons now arrives late, jokes constantly in the airplane, and blames the school's airplanes for two bad landings. What is happening, and what do you do?

STRONG FIRST ANSWER

It looks like a learner whose esteem need is under threat after the landings, using rationalization and projection to protect it. I would not argue about the airplanes. I'd lower the threat — a lesson built around something they do well, then landings broken into smaller pieces with a clear, achievable standard for each — and talk privately about what changed, because the behaviour is a signal, not the problem.

COMMON WRONG ANSWER

Labelling the learner ("lazy", "arrogant") and treating the behaviour as the thing to correct. The behaviour is the symptom.