



Australian Government  
Civil Aviation Safety Authority



# Pilot student guide

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## Want to be a pilot? Get started today!

- No age limit
- No experience needed
- Visit your local flying club
- Book a trial flight

Pretty much anyone can learn to fly as long as you can reach the controls and see out of the cockpit window.

You do have to be 15 to fly solo – your first flight all by yourself – and 16 to get your first licence. Some people even get their pilot's licence before they know how to drive a car!

The instructor will seat you in the pilot-in-command seat – which is on the left-hand side – and they will have their own set of controls, which will be exactly the same as the controls you have on your side.

The trial flight will give you an excellent idea of what flying a plane is all about: you'll get to fly 'straight and level' and practice turning, climbing and descending. The instructor will, of course, do the take-off and landing, but they might even let you have a go at taxiing (which is what pilots call 'driving' the aircraft on the ground).

## What next?

1. Talk to a few flying schools
2. Pick a school you like
3. Plan your flying
4. Be prepared to study before each lesson!

If the trial lesson is love at first flight, you will want to seriously start thinking about learning to fly. You don't have to own an aeroplane to learn to fly. Almost everyone hires one from a flying school or club.

Find a flying school that works for you. Go and talk to the instructors and find one you like – you're going to be sitting next to them for many hours.

Plan your flying. Try chatting with some other students at the school or club about what they are doing. You might fly every weekend and more in the holidays. It will take between 10 and 20 hours to go solo.

Going solo doesn't mean you have your licence yet. Getting your full private licence takes a minimum of 40 hours. However, it may take longer. It depends on the type of aircraft you're flying, the amount of time you can fly and how much you're prepared to study before your lessons!





image: Adobe stock | Yakobchuk Olena





image: Benjamin Dunk, Recreational pilot licence holder

## Benjamin Dunk

Benjamin did a trial flight at only 10!

Benjamin had his sights set on becoming a pilot from a very young age. When he first showed interest in flying, his parents organised a trial flight for him.

While he was only 10 years old, he was fascinated by everything he learned and 9 years later the very same instructor who had taken him on his first flight sent him solo.

Benjamin joined the Air Force Cadets at 13 years old and won a gliding scholarship at the age of 15, when he went solo in a glider. Benjamin is now working towards his private pilot's licence and intends to go all the way to his commercial licence. Eventually, Benjamin would like to work for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.



# Flying lessons

You've decided you want to learn to fly, how much time you can spend flying and found an instructor you like. Now, your lessons can start.



## Lessons

- Usually an hour long
- Briefing at the start to cover what you will learn
- Debriefing at the end to talk about how you went



## Learn

- Understanding and reading weather
- Using the radio
- How the aircraft works
- The rules to stay safe
- How to make sure you're in tip top condition to fly

# Exams and medicals

There are also exams and medicals you will need to consider, as well as buying some items, like books, maps and headsets.



## Exams

- No formal education needed
- You must be able to speak, read and write the English language



## Medical

- You will need a medical to make sure you are ok to fly

# Types of licence

There are different types of licences. The one you choose depends on the type of flying you want to do.

Most people think learning to fly is about becoming an airline pilot. However, there are lots more jobs and roles in aviation that you may not have even thought of, including:

- air ambulance
- crop dusting
- flying instructing
- showing tourists around the bush
- flying for fun on a sunny afternoon.

## Recreational pilot licence

- Light, single-engine aircraft as the pilot-in-command, without an instructor
- At least 16 years old
- Can only fly during the day and 25 nm (nautical miles) from the training area

## Private pilot licence

- At least 17 years old
- Can fly anywhere in Australia
- Many types of aircraft
- Can gain similar operational ratings to a commercial pilot
- Can legally share aircraft hiring costs with passengers but not hire or reward. So, while you can't charge your friends for tickets, you can share the cost of the flight with them
- Must have passed your recreational pilot licence (RPL) test

## Commercial pilot licence

- Can conduct private and commercial flight operations
- At least 18 years old
- Can be paid to fly, but there are restrictions

## Air transport pilot licence

- Can conduct private and commercial operations
- At least 21 years old
- Can command large airline-type aircraft





# Peter Holstein

Peter didn't finish school, but he never gave up!

Peter joined the Royal Australian Navy at the age of 15, after leaving school without completing year 9. He was posted into the aviation sector and that led him to take up flying lessons and become a career pilot.

Peter started with gliders, but soon moved onto powered aircraft. Having not finished year 9, Peter struggled with the theory side of aviation, but luckily found plenty of other pilots at his club willing to help him learn. He went on to achieve both a commercial aeroplane and helicopter licence with instrument ratings in both.

He then started his own company, which soon developed into a helicopter flying school. Later, Peter became a testing officer and flight examiner. He encourages all want-to-be pilots to never give up and to never be afraid of asking for help.

image: Peter Holstein, Chief pilot, AEROWASP/Touchdown Helicopters





image: Lani Smales, Flying instructor, Canberra aviation

# Lani Smales

Lani’s flying dreams came true!

Lani grew up in the UK, hearing stories of her grandfather’s time flying Lancaster bombers in World War II. She dreamed of becoming a pilot, but it wasn’t until she moved to Australia that she realised her dream could become a reality.

Lani found a job in the recreational aviation sector and used the money from her job to pay for her licence. After getting her private pilot licence, she quit her job and studied full-time to become a commercial pilot and flying instructor.

Since then, Lani has flown small air transport around Australia, and is now a full-time flying instructor. She loves teaching people to fly and encourages young people to never give up, to work hard and to keep their eyes on their goal.



# Types of flying

You can learn to fly all sorts of aircraft!

1. gliders
2. microlights
3. hot air balloons
4. helicopters
5. gyrocopters



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Once you have your licence you can also learn aerobatics, glider towing, night flying, and formation flying

## To learn more

Pilot career guide 2021. Find it in our online store – [shop.casa.gov.au/collections/career-guides](https://shop.casa.gov.au/collections/career-guides)

Flight training organisations: [casa.gov.au/search-content/flight-training-organisations](https://casa.gov.au/search-content/flight-training-organisations)

How to become a pilot: [casa.gov.au/licences-and-certificates/pilots/process-become-pilot/learning-fly](https://casa.gov.au/licences-and-certificates/pilots/process-become-pilot/learning-fly)

Medical requirements: [casa.gov.au/licences-and-certificates/aviation-medicals/medical-certificates/classes-medical-certificate](https://casa.gov.au/licences-and-certificates/aviation-medicals/medical-certificates/classes-medical-certificate)









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