



Pilot's Guide to the Flight Review

This Safety Advisor provides guidance to pilots and flight instructors for the conduct of flight reviews and to convey current FAA interpretations of Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Section 61.56.

Even though FAA-mandated flight reviews began in the 1970s, the AOPA Air Safety Foundation continues to field questions about the review process. These questions indicate a continuing need for better understanding of the review. Even today, the flight review is undergoing further examination by the FAA and the aviation industry in order to improve the product — flight safety.

The following list of the 50 most frequently asked questions are followed by answers that have been thoroughly researched for accuracy and should serve to dispel common misconceptions about the review process.

The Flight Review Concept

The flight review is required by Federal Aviation Regulations for all pilots who intend to act as pilot in command of an aircraft. It is a cooperative endeavor to provide the pilot with a periodic assessment of his or her flying skills and to determine if there has been any deterioration in areas that may adversely affect flight safety. The review should be a proficiency evaluation accomplished in an economical and expeditious manner while providing a learning experience, rather than the pressure of a checkride atmosphere.

The goal of the review should be established in a discussion between the pilot and flight instructor prior to beginning the review. This can be done by discussing the flight review's basic content, including the elements to be covered in both the oral and flight portions. These elements should be understood by the pilot and the flight instructor prior to initiating any phase of the review.

The flight review is required by Federal Aviation Regulations for all pilots who intend to act as pilot in command of an aircraft.

Each review should be individually tailored to meet, at the reasonable discretion of the flight instructor, the safe operating demands of the pilot. The primary objective of any review should be to assess the pilot's knowledge of, and ability to successfully perform, safe flight operations. Rather than using standard guidelines or a list of maneuvers, flight instructors are encouraged to determine the safe operating needs of each pilot and then formulate a meaningful review tailored to meet those needs.

The flight review regulation is reprinted below.

FAR Section 61.56

61.56 Flight Review

- (a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (f) of this section, a flight review consists of a minimum of 1 hour of flight training and 1 hour of ground training. The review must include:
 - (1) A review of the current general operating and flight rules of Part 91 of this chapter; and
 - (2) A review of those maneuvers and procedures that, at the discretion of the person giving the review, are necessary for the pilot to demonstrate the safe exercise of the privileges of the pilot certificate.
- (b) Glider pilots may substitute a minimum of three instructional flights in a glider, each of which includes a flight to traffic pattern altitude, in lieu of the 1 hour of flight training required in paragraph (a) of this section.
- (c) Except as provided in paragraphs (d), (e) and (g) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft unless, since the beginning of the 24th calendar month before the month in which that pilot acts as pilot in command, that person has—
 - (1) Accomplished a flight review given in an aircraft for which that pilot is rated by an authorized instructor; and
 - (2) A logbook endorsed from an authorized instructor who gave the review certifying that the person has satisfactorily completed the review.
- (d) A person who has, within the period specified in paragraph (c) of this section, passed a pilot proficiency check conducted by an examiner, an approved pilot check airman, or a U.S. Armed Force, for a pilot certificate, rating, or operating privilege, need not accomplish the flight review required by this section.
- (e) A person who has, within the period specified in paragraph (c) of this section, satisfactorily accom-

- plished one or more phases of an FAA-sponsored pilot proficiency award program need not accomplish the flight review required by this section.
- (f) A person who holds a current flight instructor certificate who has, within the period specified in paragraph (c) of this section, satisfactorily completed a renewal of a flight instructor certificate under the provisions of Sec. 61.197 need not accomplish the 1 hour of ground training specified in paragraph (a) of this section.
- (g) A student pilot need not accomplish the flight review required by this section provided the student pilot is undergoing training for a certificate and has a current solo flight endorsement as required under Sec. 61.87 of this part.
- (h) The requirements of this section may be accomplished in combination with the requirements of Sec. 61.57 and other applicable recent experience requirements at the discretion of the authorized instructor conducting the flight review.
- (i) A flight simulator or flight training device may be used to meet the flight review requirements of this section subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) The flight simulator or flight training device must be used in accordance with an approved course conducted by a training center certified under Part 142 of this chapter.
 - (2) Unless the flight review is undertaken in a flight simulator that is approved for landings, the applicant must meet the takeoff and landing requirements of Sec. 61.57(a) or Sec. 61.57 (b) of this part.
 - (3) The flight simulator or flight training device used must represent an aircraft or set of aircraft for which the pilot is rated.

General Information

1. Who must meet the flight review requirements?

Anyone who intends to act as pilot in command and is not affected by the exemptions listed below must complete a flight review. In addition, recreational pilots who have logged fewer than 400 flight hours must receive flight training and a logbook endorsement as required by FAR 61.101(g) if more than 180 days have passed since they acted as pilot in command of an airplane.

2. What can take the place of a flight review?

The following serve as exemptions:

- FAR Section 61.58 pilot proficiency check
- FAR Part 121 pilot proficiency check
- FAR Part 135 pilot proficiency check

- FAR Part 141 chief pilot proficiency check
- Military pilot proficiency check
- Other proficiency checks administered by the FAA
- Pilot examiner annual flight check
- Flight test for any certificate or rating
- Operations specifically authorized by the FAA
- Satisfactory completion of any phase of the FAA “Wings” program

3. Who is authorized to conduct flight reviews?

Any appropriately certificated instructor or other person designated by the FAA administrator. For more information, see questions 39, 40, and 41.

4. Will a notice of an unsuccessful flight review be submitted to the FAA?

No. The FAA is not notified of the outcome of your flight review. If the instructor conducting the flight review is unsatisfied with your performance, he or she will withhold the logbook endorsement until you can demonstrate proficient piloting abilities.

5. Does an instrument proficiency check serve as a flight review?

No. The instructor may combine the two functions during the same flight, however. In that case, the pilot’s logbook must be endorsed for an instrument proficiency check and a flight review.

Pilot Information

6. I hold a student pilot certificate. Must I get a flight review?

No. Flight reviews are required for those persons holding sport, recreational, private, commercial, and airline transport pilot (ATP) certificates. Student pilots are excepted from the flight review requirement if they are undergoing training and have a current solo flight endorsement as required under FAR 61.87. See FAR 61.56(g). General operating rules for student pilots are contained in FAR Part 61, Subpart C.

7. Why should I get a flight review?

The purpose of the review is to ensure that you continue to update and expand your skills as a pilot. You fly with an instructor of your choice who will assist you in improving your piloting abilities and make sure you’re up-to-date on current regulations, operating practices, and other subjects he or

she deems appropriate. The goal is to make flying safer for everyone. Additionally, you would be in violation of applicable FARs if you acted as pilot in command after the expiration date of your flight review.

8. My last flight review was conducted on 06-16-2006. When will it expire?

Flight reviews are valid for 24 calendar months. Your flight review is current through 06-30-2008.

9. My flight review is not current. Is my pilot certificate invalid?

No. Your pilot certificate is valid until surrendered, suspended, or revoked. You may not act as pilot in command until you satisfactorily complete a flight review; however, you may act as second in command and as a safety pilot.

10. I do not intend to carry passengers. Can I fly solo without a current flight review?

No. You are acting as pilot in command during solo flight. Therefore, you need a current flight review.

11. How do I get current to act as pilot in command?

Simple. Satisfactorily complete a flight review or any of the options listed in question 2.

12. Must I possess a current medical certificate when I get a flight review?

No. However, you cannot act as pilot in command, either during the flight review or at any time thereafter, until you have been issued a medical certificate.

13. If I do not satisfactorily complete a flight review, must I return to the same flight instructor to complete it?

No. You may complete the flight review with a different instructor. However, using the same instructor may save time because that instructor should have already evaluated some areas as satisfactory.

14. My flight review has expired. May an instructor endorse my logbook for solo flight, allowing me to practice maneuvers prior to taking my flight review?

No. There is no provision in the FARs that permits an instructor to endorse a pilot’s logbook for solo flight following the expiration of a flight review.

15. I am currently receiving dual instruction for an additional rating. Must I get a flight review?

You may not act as pilot in command after your current flight review expires. If you wish to continue to act as PIC, you must satisfactorily complete a flight review or obtain the additional rating (which serves as a flight review) before your current flight review expires.

16. May I go back to an instructor who previously gave me flight instruction and have him sign my logbook for the satisfactory completion of a flight review?

You can ask, but he or she won't likely agree to it. If you do so, recognize that you are asking the instructor to rely on memory of your previous flight(s) to ascertain whether, at that time, you met the criteria for the satisfactory completion of a flight review. Furthermore, endorsement of a flight review under those circumstances does not permit the instructor to evaluate and comment on your current flight proficiency and knowledge of FAR Part 91.

17. Must I get a flight review in each category and class of aircraft for which I am rated?

No. The satisfactory completion of a flight review allows you to exercise the privilege of pilot in command in all categories and classes of aircraft on your pilot certificate. However, recognizing that flight characteristics of aircraft differ, many pilots elect to get flight reviews in each category and class held on their pilot certificate.

18. I hold a commercial pilot certificate. Must I demonstrate all the maneuvers contained in the Commercial Pilot Practical Test Standards?

Not necessarily. You are required to demonstrate those maneuvers and procedures determined by the flight instructor as necessary to assure you can safely exercise the privileges of your certificate. See question 38 for more details.

19. I have an instrument rating. Will my flight review include a review of instrument maneuvers and procedures?

Not necessarily. The maneuvers and procedures included in a flight review are solely at the discretion of the flight instructor conducting the review.

20. Must I take an FAA written examination?

No. There is a requirement, however, that you demonstrate your knowledge of the general operating and flight rules of FAR Part 91.

21. How will I demonstrate my knowledge of FAR 91?

Usually through an informal question-and-answer session with the instructor. However, in some cases, the instructor may provide a written questionnaire for you to complete.

22. How can I show satisfactory completion of a flight review?

Your logbook will be endorsed by the flight instructor who gave you the flight review.

23. How will the endorsement appear?

The endorsement should read similar to the following: *I certify that (First name, MI, Last name), (type, e.g., private, commercial, or airline transport) pilot certificate, (pilot certificate number), has satisfactorily completed a flight review in accordance with section 61.56(a) on (date).*

24. Must I now carry my logbook on all flights to prove I've had a flight review?

If you were not required to carry your logbook before your flight review, you will not be required to carry it afterwards (see 61.51(i): Pilot logbooks). If required, you will be given a reasonable period of time to present evidence of your currency.

25. To whom must I present this evidence?

The FAA administrator or any person to whom he or she has delegated his or her authority, an authorized representative of the NTSB, or any state or local law enforcement officer. Additionally, you may be asked to show the evidence to a fixed-based operator in order to rent an airplane.

26. How do I log the flight time from a flight review?

Because the regulation specifically states "1 hour of flight instruction," it must be logged as dual instruction received. However, you may also log pilot-in-command time for the portion of the flight during which you were the sole manipulator of the controls. For more details, see FAR 61.51(e): Logging pilot-in-command flight time.

27. Is my aircraft required to have the instruments and equipment required for instrument flight?

Your aircraft must have the instruments and equipment required for the type of flight operations you intend to conduct. This decision should be made prior to the flight review.

28. May I get a flight review in an aircraft that does not have dual controls?

No. FAR 61.56 specifically requires “flight instruction,” to be given during a flight review. FAR 91.109 requires that all flight instruction be given in aircraft equipped with dual controls. The only exception to this requirement is simulated instrument flight in a single-engine aircraft with a single throw-over control wheel.

29. Can I take a flight review in a single-place airplane?

No. Again, FAR 61.56 requires that at least one hour of flight instruction be given to qualify as a review. The term “flight instruction” is generally construed to mean instruction given to a person while in an aircraft accompanied by a flight instructor. Although it is always possible for the FAA to change its interpretation, the present answer to this question is that a flight review cannot be conducted in a single-place airplane.

30. Can I take a flight review in an aircraft certified in the experimental category?

Yes. It must meet the dual-control requirements and, of course, any limitations imposed by FAR 91.319. In addition, you must comply with the applicable limitations on the aircraft’s airworthiness certificate.

31. May I use a basic or advanced aviation training device (ATD), formerly known as a PCATD, exclusively for a flight review?

No. However, a flight training device (FTD) or flight simulator may be used (subject to the conditions set forth in FAR 61.56(i)).

32. I recently acquired a pilot certificate issued by a foreign country. Does this serve as a flight review?

No. Foreign-issued pilot certificates are not listed as an exemption under FAR 61.56(d) or (e).

33. I am residing outside of the United States. Do I need a flight review?

If you are acting as pilot in command on the basis of your U.S. pilot certificate, you must have a current flight review. Acting as pilot in command on the basis of a foreign certificate does not require a flight review unless required by the foreign country that issued the certificate.

34. I am a recently discharged military pilot. The date of my last military pilot proficiency check was 05-20-2006. When must I complete a flight review?

A military pilot proficiency check serves as a flight review for the standard 24-calendar month duration. In order to continue acting as pilot in command, you must satisfactorily complete a flight review on or before 05-31-2008.

Instructor Information

35. Who acts as pilot in command during a flight review?

This question should be resolved before the flight so that both you and the pilot have a clear understanding of PIC responsibilities. You should inspect the pilot’s logbook, pilot certificate, and medical certificate to ensure that he or she is qualified to act as pilot in command. If the pilot does not meet the pilot-in-command requirements, you must assume that role. While you are in the process of inspecting paperwork, don’t forget to check the status of the aircraft. Is it airworthy?

36. What is the minimum amount of time for a flight review?

The time required will vary with the individual pilot and flight instructor. Reviews must consist of at least one hour of ground and one hour of flight instruction.

37. What subjects are covered during the oral portion?

As you know, the only subject specified by FAR 61.56 is FAR Part 91. It is recommended that you tailor the review of Part 91 to the needs of the pilot being reviewed. The objective is to ensure that the pilot can comply with regulatory requirements and operate safely in various types of airspace and under various weather conditions. As a result, you should conduct a review that is broad enough to meet this objective, yet provide a more comprehensive and in-depth review in those areas where the pilot’s knowledge is not as extensive. In the latter instance, you may wish to employ a variety of reference sources to ensure that the pilot’s knowledge is current.

The review of Part 91 is critical due to the increasing complexity of airspace and the need to ensure that all pilots are familiar with Class B, Class C, and all other types of airspace. The flight review may be the only time some pilots spend reviewing the regula-

tions. Accordingly, you should place appropriate emphasis on this part of the review.

The following outline may provide you with a useful format for organizing the Part 91 review and ensuring that essential areas are covered.

Subpart A—General

- 91.3 Responsibility and authority of the pilot in command
- 91.7 Civil aircraft airworthiness
- 91.9 Civil aircraft flight manual, marking, and placard requirements
- 91.17 Alcohol or drugs
- 91.21 Portable electronic devices

Subpart B—Flight Rules

- 91.103 Preflight action
- 91.107 Use of safety belts, shoulder harnesses and child restraint systems
- 91.113 Right-of-way rules: Except water operations
- 91.117 Aircraft speed
- 91.119 Minimum safe altitudes: General
- 91.123 Compliance with ATC clearances and instructions
- 91.126 to 91.131 and 91.135 Operations in Class G, E, D, C, B, and Class A airspace
- 91.139 Emergency air traffic rules
- 91.151 Fuel requirements for flight in VFR conditions
- 91.155 Basic VFR weather minimums
- 91.157 Special VFR weather minimums
- 91.167 Fuel requirements for flight in IFR conditions
- 91.175 Takeoff and landing under IFR
- 91.177 Minimum altitudes for IFR operations
- 91.185 IFR operations: Two-way radio communications failure

Subpart C—Equipment, Instrument, and Certificate Requirements

- 91.207 Emergency locator transmitters
- 91.213 Inoperative instruments and equipment
- 91.215 ATC transponder and altitude reporting equipment and use

Subpart D—Special Flight Operations

- 91.303 Aerobatic flight
- 91.325 Primary category aircraft: Operating limitations

Subpart E—Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance and Alterations

- 91.409 Inspections
- 91.411 Altimeter system and altitude reporting equipment tests and inspections
- 91.413 ATC transponder tests and inspections
- 91.417 Maintenance records

Other subjects recommended for discussion with the pilot include aviation weather, aeronautical charts, navigation, weight and balance, and the pilot's operating handbook. Aeronautical decision making (ADM) should also be discussed.

38. What maneuvers and procedures are covered during the in-flight portion?

Prior to undertaking the review, you should interview the pilot to determine the nature of his or her flying and operating requirements. The maneuvers and procedures reviewed will vary, depending on the make and model of the aircraft used. For example, a review in a light multi-engine airplane should be different from one conducted in a small, two-seat tailwheel airplane without a radio or upgraded instrumentation. You may wish to recommend that the pilot take the flight review in the aircraft usually flown, or in the most complex make and model if several aircraft are flown regularly. You should also consider your own experience and qualifications in a given make and model of aircraft prior to giving a flight review in it.

Prior to establishing a plan for conducting a flight review, consider the type of flying generally performed by the pilot. For example, a pilot conducting long-distance flights between busy terminal areas may need a different review than a pilot who generally flies in the local area from the same airport. Nevertheless, you should consider the need for an in-depth review of certain subjects or procedures if the type of flight operations is likely to change or if other circumstances exist. For example, a pilot who normally conducts only local flight operations may be planning to begin flying to a location in Class B airspace. Another pilot may operate only a two-seat aircraft without a radio but in close proximity to Class B airspace. In both cases, you should include Class B requirements and operating procedures as part of the flight review.

The maneuvers and procedures selected for the flight review should be based on the pilot's experience—total, recent, and general type—as determined from an inspection of the pilot's logbook. For example, a pilot who has not flown in several years may require an extensive review of basic maneuvers from the practical test standards appropriate to the pilot's certificate. This

same pilot may also require a more extensive review of FAR Part 91, including recent changes in airspace.

Regardless of flight experience, ensure that the plan includes all areas in which you determine that the pilot needs a review in order to operate safely.

Additional information may be found in the current editions of FAA Advisory Circulars 61-65 and 61-98.

39. The only rating on my flight instructor certificate is instrument-airplane. May I conduct flight reviews?

No. In order to conduct flight reviews, a flight instructor must hold a category rating, such as *airplane*, on his or her instructor certificate. Because you hold an instrument instructor rating only, you are not authorized to conduct flight reviews.

40. The ratings on my pilot certificate include airplane, single and multiengine land and glider. The ratings on my flight instructor certificate include airplane, multiengine and glider. Which aircraft may I use?

You may conduct flight reviews in all multiengine land airplanes that weigh 12,500 pounds or less (which are not turbojet powered) and gliders. You may not conduct flight reviews in a single-engine airplane because you do not hold that airplane class on your flight instructor certificate.

41. The ratings on my pilot certificate include airplane, single and multiengine land. The ratings on my flight instructor certificate include airplane, single and multiengine. May I give a flight review in a single-engine seaplane?

No. You may not conduct a flight review in a single-engine seaplane because you do not hold that airplane class on your pilot certificate.

In summary, the aircraft category and class used for the flight review must appear on the pilot's certificate and your pilot certificate. Your flight instructor certificate must list the appropriate aircraft category and you must be an authorized instructor for the particular aircraft class.

42. Must I possess a current medical certificate when I conduct a flight review?

No. You should ensure, however, during the preflight phase of the review, that the pilot is qualified for (and accepts) the role of pilot in command.

43. If I have my MEI, am I required to have five hours of PIC in the make and model of aircraft before I conduct a flight review?

No. The five-hour experience requirement is for giving flight instruction for the issuance of a certificate or rating in multiengine airplanes and helicopters.

44. What are my responsibilities after the flight review is complete?

Upon completion of the review, you should debrief the pilot and inform him or her whether the review was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Regardless of this determination, you should provide the pilot with comprehensive analysis of his or her performance, including any weak areas. If the flight review was satisfactory, endorse the pilot's logbook accordingly. You should not endorse the pilot's logbook to reflect an unsatisfactory review.

45. How do I log the flight time?

You may log the entire flight as pilot-in-command time as provided by FAR Section 61.51(e)(3).

46. Must I keep a record of the flight reviews I give?

Although the FAR 61.189 does not require you to keep a record of flight reviews you give, it is highly recommended that you do so.

47. Am I required to get flight reviews?

Yes. If you do not meet an exemption listed in question 2 and you want to retain the privilege to act as pilot in command, you must meet the requirement.

48. Must I go to the FAA FSDO for my flight review?

No. An appropriately certificated flight instructor or person designated by the FAA administrator may conduct your flight review.

49. May I endorse my logbook for the satisfactory completion of a flight review?

No. FAR 61.195(i) specifically prohibits flight instructors from making any self-endorsement for a certificate, rating, flight review, authorization, operating privilege, practical test, or knowledge test that is required by Part 61.

50. Will attendance at a flight instructor refresher course serve as a flight review?

Yes, but only in part. Attendance at a course conducted to meet the provision of FAR 61.197 will satisfy the *ground* portion of the review. However, it will not satisfy the *flight* portion.

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