

FAA Requirements to Obtain an Instrument Rating (Summary)

1. Hold at least a Private Pilot Certificate
2. Be able to read, write, and converse fluently in English
3. Hold a current FAA medical certificate
4. Receive and log ground training from an authorized instructor or complete a home-study course
5. Pass a knowledge test with a score of 70% or better. The instrument rating knowledge test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions selected from the airplane-related questions in the FAA's instrument rating test bank.
6. Accumulate appropriate flight experience
7. Receive flight instruction and demonstrate skill
8. Successfully complete a practical (flight) test given as a final exam by an FAA inspector or designated pilot examiner and conducted as specified in the FAA's Instrument Rating Practical Test Standards.

Instrument Pilot Privileges and Limitations

With an instrument rating, you will have the freedom to fly in more places and in Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC).

As the title implies, an instrument rating permits you to fly "by instruments," i.e., without visual references to the ground, horizon, and other landmarks. You will be able to fly through clouds, rain, fog, etc., all of which restrict visibility. This skill is particularly useful when you fly long distances. It is frequently difficult to travel such distances without encountering weather systems requiring instrument pilot skills.

As an instrument rated pilot, you are required to adhere to the operating and flight rules as outlined in FAR Part 91.167-193. These include:

1. Specific fuel requirements
2. IFR flight plan and ATC clearances
3. Takeoff and landing minimums
4. Altitude and communication requirements

FAA Requirements to Obtain an Instrument Rating (Detailed Version)

1. Hold at least a Private Pilot Certificate.
2. Be able to read, write, and converse fluently in English.
3. Hold a current third-class FAA medical certificate.
 - a. You must undergo a routine medical examination which may be administered only by an FAA-designated doctor called an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME)
 - b. Even if you have a physical handicap, medical certificates can be issued in many cases. Operating limitation may be imposed depending on the nature of the disability.
 - c. Your FAA-Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI) or Fixed-Base Operator (FBO) will be able to recommend an AME. [NOTE: An FBO is an airport business that gives flight lessons, sells aviation fuel, repairs airplanes, etc.]

4. Receive and log ground training from an authorized instructor or complete either an online study course or home-study course to learn the following:
 - a. Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) that apply to flight under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR)
 - b. Appropriate information that applies to flight operations under IFR in the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM)
 - c. Air traffic control system and procedures for instrument flight operations
 - d. IFR navigation and approaches by use of navigation systems
 - e. Use of IFR en route and instrument approach procedure charts
 - f. Procurement and use of aviation weather reports and forecasts and the elements of forecasting weather trends based on that information and personal observation of weather conditions
 - g. Safe and efficient operation of aircraft under instrument flight rules and conditions
 - h. Recognition of critical weather situations and windshear avoidance
 - i. Aeronautical decision making and judgment
 - j. Crew resource management, including communication and coordination
5. Pass the FAA instrument rating knowledge test, at an FAA-designated computer testing center, with a score of 70% or better. The instrument rating knowledge test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions selected from the airplane-related questions in the FAA's instrument rating test bank.
6. Accumulate appropriate flight experience (FAR 61.65)
 - a. 50 hours of cross-country flight time as pilot-in-command (PIC), of which at least 10 hours must be in airplanes
 - b. A total of 40 hours of actual or simulated instrument time in the areas of operations listed in item 7 below, including:
 - i. 15 hours of instrument flight training from a CFII
 - ii. 3 hours of instrument training
7. Demonstrate flight proficiency (FAR 61.65). Receive and log training and obtain a logbook endorsement by your CFII on the following areas of operation:
 - a. Preflight preparation
 - b. Preflight procedures
 - c. Air traffic control clearances and procedures
 - d. Flight by reference to instruments
 - e. Navigation systems
 - f. Instrument approach procedures
 - g. Emergency operations
 - h. Post-flight procedures

Successful complete a practical (flight) test given as a final exam by an FAA inspector or Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE); conducted as specified in the most current version of the FAA's Instrument Pilot Practical Test Standards (PTS).