

Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) — Syllabus Guide

FAA · EASA · CAAC | Hong Kong Macau General Aviation — Flight Training | October 2026

About the CPL

The Commercial Pilot Licence is the first licence that permits flying for compensation. This guide compares the aeroplane (single-engine) CPL under the three major authorities: the **FAA CPL** (USA, 14 CFR Part 61 Subpart F), the **EASA CPL(A)** (Europe, Part-FCL Subpart D with the modular course in Appendix 3.E) and the **CAAC CPL** (China, CCAR-61 Chapter F). A CPL holder may act as PIC or co-pilot in commercial operations other than those requiring an airline transport licence.

1. Licence overview — side-by-side

Item	FAA CPL	EASA CPL(A)	CAAC CPL
Regulation basis	14 CFR Part 61, Subpart F (§61.121–61.133)	Reg. (EU) No 1178/2011 Annex I, Part-FCL Subpart D + Appendix 3.E (modular)	CCAR-61 Chapter F (§61.151–61.173)
Minimum age	18	18 (FCL.300)	18
Medical	FAA 2nd-class medical	EASA Part-MED Class 1 medical	CAAC Class I medical certificate
Prerequisite	Hold at least a private pilot certificate (61.123(h))	PPL(A) + 150 h flight time incl. 50 h PIC (10 h cross-country) before the CPL flight course	Hold a private pilot licence; complete commercial theory + practical exams
Instrument relevance	Instrument rating required for carrying passengers for hire at night or beyond 50 NM	Night rating required; instrument rating credited toward the 10 h instrument instruction	Instrument and night training embedded in the CPL syllabus (61.159)
Ground training	Ground training / home study on the 61.125 knowledge areas	CPL(A) theory course ≥ 250 h instruction at an ATO/DTO	Commercial theory course per the CAAC CPL theory syllabus (61.155)
Written exam	FAA knowledge test (computer)	13 theoretical knowledge subjects (FCL.310), 75% pass per subject	CAAC commercial pilot theory examination (computer-based)
Practical exam	Practical test (checkride) on the 61.127 areas	Skill test per Appendix 4 to Part-FCL (FCL.320)	Practical test per the CAAC practical test standards (AC-61-10)
Min. flight hours	250 h total (or 190 h via approved Part 142 course)	200 h total flight time (Appendix 3.E.12) + the CPL course (25 h dual / 15 h if IR held)	250 h total (or reduced via CCAR-141 approved course)
PIC time	100 h PIC incl. 50 h in airplanes; 50 h cross-country PIC	100 h PIC incl. 20 h cross-country PIC	100 h PIC incl. 50 h in airplanes; 50 h cross-country PIC
Solo / qualifying XC	300 NM solo XC, 3 landings, one ≥ 250 NM from departure	One VFR solo XC ≥ 540 km (300 NM) with full-stop landings at 2 different aerodromes	One XC ≥ 540 km with 2 landing points, one ≥ 150 km from departure
Privileges	Commercial operations for compensation; airline ops require ATP	All LAPL/PPL privileges + PIC in commercial ops other than air transport; co-pilot in CAT (FCL.305)	PIC/co-pilot for compensation in general commercial aviation; not PIC in CCAR-121 transport ops requiring ATPL (61.173)



2. FAA CPL — syllabus (14 CFR 61.125 / 61.127 / 61.129)

2a. Aeronautical knowledge areas (61.125(b)):

Knowledge areas (numbered per the rule)	
(1) Applicable regulations on commercial pilot privileges, limitations and flight operations	(2) NTSB accident reporting requirements
(3) Basic aerodynamics and the principles of flight	(4) Meteorology — critical weather, windshear recognition and avoidance, weather reports and forecasts
(5) Safe and efficient operation of aircraft	(6) Weight and balance computations
(7) Use of performance charts	(8) Significance and effects of exceeding performance limitations
(9) Aeronautical charts and magnetic compass for pilotage and dead reckoning	(10) Use of air navigation facilities
(11) Aeronautical decision making and judgment	(12) Principles and functions of aircraft systems
(13) Maneuvers, procedures and emergency operations appropriate to the aircraft	(14) Night and high-altitude operations
(15) Procedures for operating within the National Airspace System	(16) (LTA ratings: procedures for flight and ground training)

2b. Flight proficiency — areas of operation (61.127(b)(1), airplane single-engine):

Areas of operation	
(i) Preflight preparation	(vii) Navigation
(ii) Preflight procedures	(viii) Slow flight and stalls
(iii) Airport and seaplane base operations	(ix) Emergency operations
(iv) Takeoffs, landings and go-arounds	(x) High-altitude operations
(v) Performance maneuvers	(xi) Postflight procedures
(vi) Ground reference maneuvers	Performance maneuvers include commercial standards: steep turns, chandelles, lazy eights, steep spirals, 8-point rolls as applicable

2c. Minimum aeronautical experience (61.129(a), airplane single-engine):

Requirement	Detail
Total flight time	250 h as a pilot, comprising the requirements below (190 h suffices via an approved Part 142 course)
Powered aircraft	100 h in powered aircraft, of which 50 h in airplanes
PIC time	100 h PIC, incl. 50 h in airplanes and 50 h cross-country PIC of which ≥ 10 h in airplanes
Training (dual, 20 h)	10 h instrument training (view-limiting device; ≥ 5 h in a single-engine airplane); 10 h in a complex, turbine or technically-advanced airplane (TAA); one 2-h day XC > 100 NM straight-line; one 2-h night XC > 100 NM straight-line; 3 h test prep within 2 calendar months
Solo / PICUS (10 h)	One cross-country ≥ 300 NM total with landings at ≥ 3 points, one ≥ 250 NM from departure; 5 h night VFR with 10 takeoffs and 10 landings at an airport with an operating control tower
Simulator credit	Up to 50 h toward total experience in an FFS/FTD (up to 100 h via a Part 142 course)

3. EASA CPL(A) — syllabus (Part-FCL Subpart D + Appendix 3.E modular course)

3a. Theoretical knowledge examination (FCL.310) — 13 subjects, 75% pass per subject:

Block	Detail
Subjects	Air law · Aircraft general knowledge: airframe/systems/powerplant · Aircraft general knowledge: instrumentation · Mass and balance · Performance · Flight planning and monitoring · Human performance · Meteorology · General navigation · Radio navigation · Operational procedures · Principles of flight · VFR communications
Theory course	≥ 250 hours of instruction (Appendix 3.E.6) at an ATO or DTO

3b. CPL(A) modular course (Appendix 3.E):

Element	Requirement
Entry prerequisites	PPL(A) holder; 150 h flight time incl. 50 h PIC on aeroplanes (10 h cross-country) before commencing flight training
Flying training — no IR	≥ 25 h dual flight instruction, incl. 10 h instrument instruction (up to 5 h may be ground time in BITD/FNPT/FFS)
Flying training — IR held	≥ 15 h dual visual flight instruction (instrument instruction fully credited); IR(H) holders credited up to 5 h
Night (if no night rating)	+ 5 h night flight instruction: 3 h dual incl. 1 h cross-country navigation + 5 solo takeoffs and 5 solo full-stop landings
Complex aeroplane	≥ 5 h of the instruction in an aeroplane certificated for ≥ 4 persons with variable-pitch propeller and retractable landing gear
Upset training	Theoretical knowledge and flight instruction include upset prevention and recovery training (FCL.315.A)

3c. Experience requirements (Appendix 3.E.12):

Element	Requirement
Total flight time	≥ 200 h flight time, including at least the items below
PIC time	100 h as PIC, incl. 20 h cross-country as PIC, including one VFR cross-country ≥ 540 km (300 NM) with full-stop landings at 2 aerodromes different from departure
Night	5 h at night: 3 h dual incl. 1 h cross-country navigation + 5 solo takeoffs and 5 solo full-stop landings
Instrument	10 h instrument flight instruction (up to 5 h may be FNPT I/II or FFS ground time; BITD not credited)
Multi-engine	6 h in a multi-engine aeroplane if a multi-engine aeroplane is used for the skill test
Crediting	PIC on other categories may count toward the 200 h: up to 30 h helicopter (PPL(H)) / 100 h (CPL(H)), 30 h TMG or sailplane, 30–60 h airships
Skill test	Per Appendix 4 to Part-FCL (FCL.320): demonstrate as PIC the procedures and manoeuvres with CPL competency



4. CAAC CPL ■■■■■■ — syllabus (CCAR-61 Chapter F)

4a. Eligibility (§61.153):

Item	Requirement
Age / record / education	≥ 18; good moral character; high-school education or above; no criminal record within 5 years
Language	Correct reading/listening/speaking/writing of Chinese for radiotelephony (or licence limitation applied)
Medical	CAAC Class I medical certificate
Prerequisite	Hold a private pilot licence; complete theory and practical exams (61.153(f)-(g))

4b. Ground theory (§61.155):

Block	Detail
Syllabus per the CAAC CPL theory examination outline	Regulations (CCAR-61/91), air law, aircraft general knowledge, instrumentation, mass and balance, performance, flight planning and monitoring, human performance, meteorology, general and radio navigation, operational procedures, principles of flight, communications — at commercial licence level

4c. Flight training and experience (§61.157 / §61.159, airplane single-engine ■■■■):

Element	Requirement
Total experience	≥ 250 h pilot flight time (reducible via a CCAR-141 approved course)
Powered aircraft time	≥ 100 h in powered aircraft, of which ≥ 50 h in airplanes
PIC time ■■	≥ 100 h PIC, incl. ≥ 50 h in airplanes and 50 h cross-country PIC (≥ 10 h in airplanes)
Skill training ■■■■ (20 h)	10 h instrument training (≥ 5 h in a single-engine airplane); 10 h in a complex airplane ■■■■; one 2-h day VFR cross-country of 180 km; one 2-h night cross-country of 180 km; 3 h practical-test preparation within 60 days
Special maneuvers ■■ (5 h)	Spin recognition/entry/recovery, steep turns, steep spirals, chandelles, lazy eights, elevator-trim stalls etc. per the practical test standards
Solo ■■ (10 h)	One cross-country ≥ 540 km total with at least 2 different landing points, one ≥ 150 km straight-line from departure; 5 h night VFR at an airport with an operating control tower incl. 10 takeoffs and 10 landings
Simulator credit	Up to 50 h in approved flight simulators or training devices (up to 5 h of the instrument training)
Privileges (§61.173)	All PPL privileges + PIC or co-pilot for compensation in general commercial aviation; not PIC in CCAR-121 transport operations requiring an ATPL; night limitation removable per §61.171

Figures current as of October 2026 from the official texts — 14 CFR Part 61 Subpart F (eCFR), Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011 Annex I Part-FCL Subpart D with Appendix 3.E as amended, and CCAR-61 Chapter F with CAAC examination guidance. Applicants should confirm current requirements with the relevant aviation authority before enrolment. Enquiries: info@general-aviation.asia

