

The skies the limit

Private Pilot Licence - PPL And LAPL (A)



Everything you need to know and more about learning to fly aeroplanes.

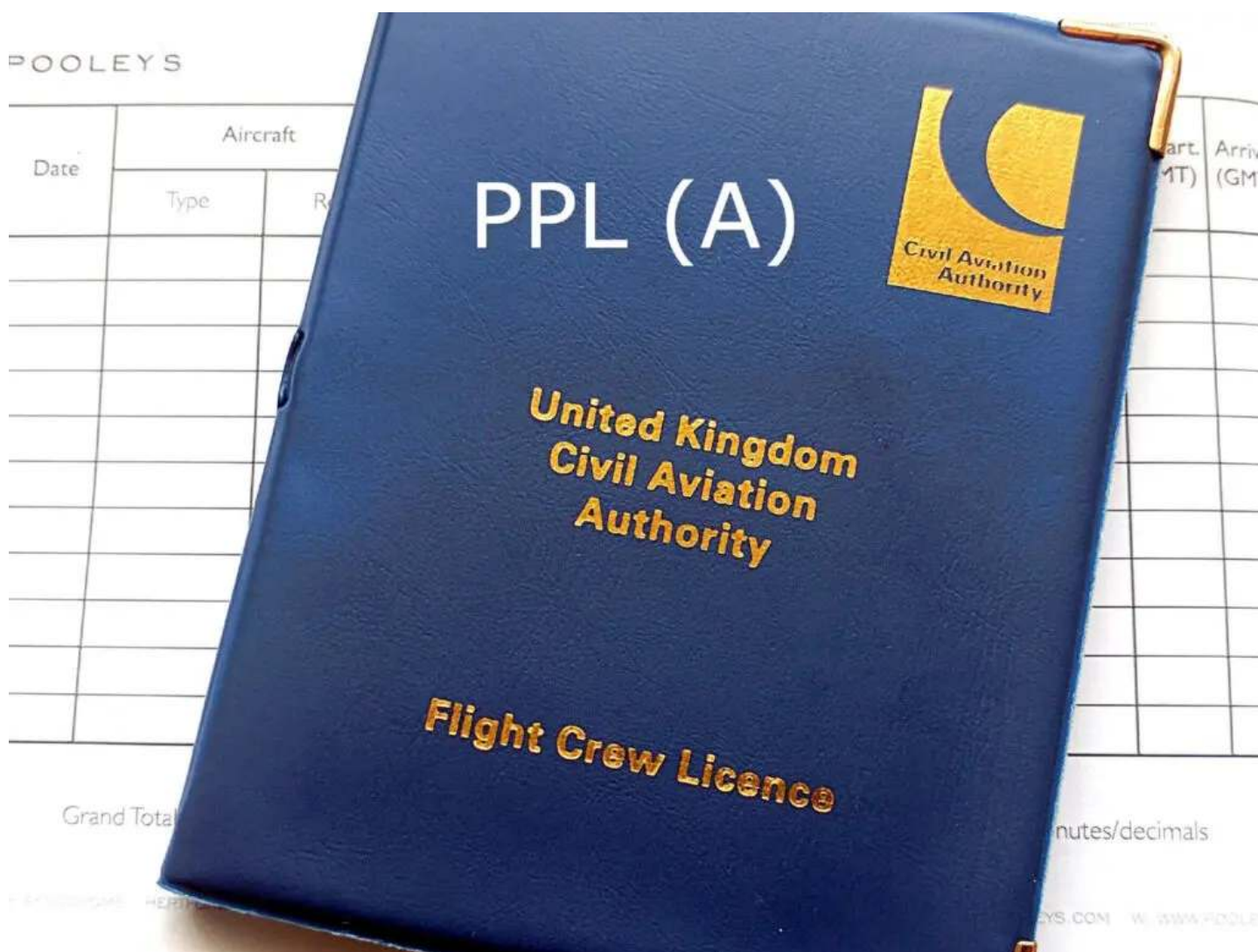
If you are considering to learn to fly but not sure where to start, you're in the right place. This guide will give you all of the information you can ever need to help you on your way to becoming a pilot.

Learning to fly is an amazing thing to do but requires a sizeable time and financial investment, so not something you should consider lightly.

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In the first instance we recommend taking a trial lesson or two. A trial lesson gives you an insight into what it is actually like to fly a light aircraft hands on. We would never recommend committing yourself to flying lessons until you have had one or two trial flights to make sure its right for you. Information about our [Trial Flying Lessons](#) can be found here. Whats more the time in the aircraft on your trial lesson will count towards training hours. We also offer you a FREE consultation to discuss one to one what it takes to learn to fly and give you an insight to all the costs and things which you need to know in detail. [Book your consultation here>>](#)

Choosing a licence that suits my needs



There are currently two licence available for recreational pilots, the [Light Aircraft Pilot's Licence \(LAPL\)](#) and [Private Pilot's Licence \(PPL\)](#). The LAPL is not so widely offered as the PPL, but for pilots who are only looking to fly for recreation and not for further commercial training, its an excellent option and cheaper to obtain. In fact from my experience the majority of private pilots I meet could do all of there flying on a LAPL licence and could have saved themselves money in the process. I would strongly suggest that you study the differences between each licence and make a decision based on what suits your needs.

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

Both the Light Aircraft Pilots Licence (LAPL) and Private Pilots Licence (PPL) can be gained from the age of 17. However you can start logging hours from the age of 14 and can fly solo at 16. Both licences allow the holder to fly in the UK and Europe for pleasure. **Be aware that flight hours logged toward a LAPL cannot be used towards a PPL.** So if you start training towards a LAPL and decide after 20 hours that you want the PPL these 20 hours don't count. Potentially a very expensive mistake. It is possible to transfer once the licence has been issued however this is very time consuming not to mention expensive. Also we have separate pages for each licence type where you can get more information.

PPL and LAPL Pilot Licences Compared

For a PPL the CAA requires a minimum of 45 hours flight training to include 25 hours dual flying with a flying instructor. You will also need 10 hours solo, including at least 5 hours of cross country navigation. The cross country hours must include a qualifying cross country flight of 150 nautical miles landing away at two other aerodromes. The remaining 10 hours will be dual or solo, depending on the needs of the student. Once the syllabus has been completed the student will undertake a 'skills test'. Successful completion of this will lead to licence issue.

The LAPL requires fewer flying hours to achieve. A minimum of 30 hours is required to include 15 hours of dual instruction and 6 hours of solo flight. Of these solo hours 3 hours must be cross country navigation to include a qualifying cross country flight of 80 nautical miles and a stop at one aerodrome. The remaining hours will be solo or dual depending on the needs of the student. As with the PPL once the syllabus has been completed the student will be required to pass a skills test.

The LAPL does not allow the addition of ratings such as the instrument rating or multi engine and it cannot be used as the basis for a commercial license. However this being said the night rating and aerobatic rating can be added to a LAPL, therefore the holder can still fly at night and perform aerobatics with the appropriate training. One thing to mention is that the LAPL limits you to a single engine piston aircraft of up to 2000kg and only enables you to carry up to 3 passengers. You must also complete 10 hours PIC post licence issue before taking a passenger.

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In order to keep a PPL current the holder is required to fly 12 hours in the 12 months preceding the expiry of the single engine rating. The LAPL on the other hand is a single engine only licence. This makes things much simpler in terms of revalidation. As long as the holder has flown 12 hours in a 12 month rolling period, the licence remains valid.

The PPL is ideal if you think that you may want to take your flying further, if you are sure that you only want to fly for pleasure then a LAPL may be best.

Get your medical first

This sounds like a chore when all you want to do is get flying, but trust me if you are serious about learning to fly, this is really important. If you are training towards a PPL you will need a Class 2 Medical. If you are training towards a LAPL you will need a LAPL medical. People do fail medicals or have complications that are lengthy to sort out. So imagine you have started training and worst case you find out you cannot obtain medical. You will have wasted money on flight training and be hugely disappointed, or fail and cannot feasibly get a medical for months. In that scenario do you continue to fly to keep you skills up to scratch or wait it out?

By getting your medical first, not only could you save time, money and disappointment you can also ensure you are ready for solo flight. Bare in mind that if you are on a Fast track course it could be in as little as few weeks before you are ready for solo.

We have an in house Medical Examiner who is here twice a week to complete your medical, so don't worry you don't need to go anywhere else.

Choosing a flight school

This is hugely important. Although all schools are able to provide you the training required, the level of professionalism, structure to training and customer service varies hugely in my experience. You should most importantly be made to feel welcome and feel that the school has time to speak with you in a friendly environment. Get chatting with other members, if you can, as this is always a good indication to how well you will be treated as a customer and don't forget to check out the schools reviews and case studies if they have them. Ask as many questions as you can and be sure to follow up any questions you think of afterwards. There is never a silly question to ask or too many questions to ask. Make sure you are clear in your mind as to what you are getting into.

Ultimately you are going to be spending a lot of money learning to fly so you need to feel your school is looking after your best interests.

In our case we offer students a [FREE consultation](#) to discuss their needs and options. From my experience there are all too many schools who simply want to talk students into signing up for lessons, straight after a trial lesson, without enough prior information. We like to offer an approach that gives enough information to deter people who are not serious about learning to fly, but arms the serious ones with everything they need to know.

Ask your school to create you a training plan based around your circumstances, and give you some indication as to how long your training should take. A structured written training plan is essential so that you know where you are at with your training and what comes next. Remember that consistency in training is the most important factor when training and without it you are likely to spend longer than you actually need to complete your training and thus costing you much more than necessary.

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

Look at what facilities your school offers in terms of aircraft, flight instructors and their availability, ground instruction, theory exams, on line training resources, medicals etc. Some schools do not offer in house solutions so you will need to factor in the inconvenience and additional costs of going elsewhere for these services.

Ask your school if they use permanent instructors, the smaller flying clubs tend to have lots of self employed instructors that will not always be available when you need them. If you go to a school with a team of employed instructors you have a much better chance of seeing your training through with the same instructor on days that suits you.

Choosing a flight instructor

This sounds silly but is hugely important. Ultimately they are all trained to deliver what you require but this person needs to fill you with confidence, make you feel at ease and receptive to learning. If the instructor makes you feel on edge, uncomfortable or your personalities just clash this will impact your training in a negative way. It maybe worth doing worth doing a trial lesson with your proposed instructor to see how you get on. Make sure you are able to switch instructors if you do clash, generally I would recommend once you have found the instructor you like flying with stick with them for the duration of the course. Consistency is key and if you are constantly moving from instructor to instructor you will not progress quickly. Always have a backup instructor for if your regular one is sick or off work for any period of time.

We have a dedicated team of full time flight instructors and examiners. Ensuring that you receive the highest standard of training. Having in-house examiners means that we can take people from no experience to a pilot licence in 3 months, or even less in some cases. If you're looking at learning to fly as quickly as possible take a look at our [fast track scheme](#).

How much does it cost

Ask your school for an accurate costing if you complete in the minimum hours and what the additional charges may be required after that point. Most people require 10 – 15 hours over the minimum hour requirements, so factor that in. Ask for the following costs: medical, landing fees, aircraft hire, flight and ground instruction, flight equipment, ground exams, radio licence, skills test and licence issue costs. Ask your school if there are any other charges they make to students such as membership costs, subscriptions etc and bare in mind that the aircraft may vary in rates, so get a costing on the actual aircraft you wish to fly.

Beware of schools that will not give you a full cost breakdown or schools that on the face of it appear to be offering courses cheaply. Cheap is rarely a good thing in aviation, so make sure you do not get caught out by hidden extras. Most cheap offerings only include the minimum hours and nothing else mentioned or quotes based upon the cheapest aircraft not the one you chose.

Once you have an accurate costing for your training including all of the costs mentioned, do some budgeting. How frequently a month can you afford to fly without getting yourself into difficulty? If its less than our recommended minimum of one lesson per month I would consider putting off the training until finances allow. The more frequently you can fly the more progress you will make, the more consistent your flying will become and more likely you will pass in fewer hours, thus reducing the costs.

Typical example:

- 45 hours dual instruction £8775
- Flight equipment (starter kit and headset) £350
- Landings fees across the course £700
- 9 theory exams £315
- Medical £200
- Radio Licence £200
- Skills Test £550 including aircraft hire
- CAA Licence fee £200
- **Total £11290**
- Additional 10 hours training £1950
- **Grand Total £13240**

Word Of Warning

One of the BIG things I tell people to avoid is flying outside of their financial means. What I mean by that is never get into debt to learn as you will not be able to maintain flying afterwards if you are paying off debts associated with flying and trying to fund future flying. Its better to have two lessons a month than a lesson every week, then run out of funds. This only leads to long gaps in training, back tracking and unnecessary additional costs.

How long does it take

Most people achieve a PPL in around 55 hours and LAPL in Around 40 hours, so this gives you an indication that the minimum hours are achievable for only a few.

People who learn to fly once a month will expect to take years to pass and are extremely unlikely to pass in minimum hours.

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

The key is to do it as fast as you can within your budget. Just to put it into perspective one of our fast track students flew every day and achieved PPL (a) in less than four weeks. Most Fast Track students take 3 – 6 months and regular students 12 – 18 months, so it really does depend on your aptitude, frequency of training and finances to support frequent training.

Choosing an aircraft



Take a look at the school fleet and see what fits with your budget. The shiny aircraft or the most expensive on the fleet might look attractive on first glance, but bare in mind that you will be with this aircraft for at least the minimum hours, so make sure its affordable, you feel confident in it and you are comfortable in it.

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

Consistency is key, so stick with the same aircraft for the duration of the course. If you decide to change type do it very early on in your training to avoid unnecessary back tracking. At the end of the day the aircraft is just a tool, they are all capable trainers.

Theory Exams

There are 9 theory subjects to study for both PPL and LAPL

- AirLaw
- Operational Procedures
- Communications
- Meteorology
- Aircraft General Knowledge
- Flight Planning And Performance
- Human Performance And Limitations
- Principles Of Flight
- Navigation

All of the study materials you need we stock here and recommend the Pooley's revision material. We recommend reading the books and use an online revision tool such as PPL Expert to help you revise.

The exams are in an electronic format. You will need to register with the CAA to take the exams and nominate your test centre. We are registered here and have an in house examiner.

The exams are usually 12 – 24 questions and depending on the number of questions 20 – 50 minutes in duration.

If you fail an exam you have up to four attempts at each subject after which you will need to resit the entire 9 exams again. You have 18 months to take the theory exams from the date of your first exam and 24 months to pass your skills test after the date of the last exam.

Is self study enough to pass the exams?

For a lot of people yes, however most need some sort of assistance at some point. Most schools offer some level of [ground schooling](#).

We offer here one to one instruction, individual subjects or a 5 day intensive ground school in person or via ZOOM. We also have our online training platform PPL expert.

There are also pre recorded distance learning modules available.

Flight Training

Most schools operate early lessons as 1 hour flights with a brief and de brief at either end of your lesson. As you progress the air time may increase to accommodate longer navigation routes.

The initial flight training is based around familiarising yourself with the controls of the aircraft and their effects, circuit procedures, circuit emergencies and mastering the art of taking off and more importantly landing.

At around 14 – 20 hours depending on your ability you should be ready for your first solo flight. This will be assessed by your instructor and they will sign you off as fit to complete first solo, as and when they deem you competent. At this point you should have your medical in place and have completed the air law exam and communications exam is also advisable.

You will then do some circuit consolidation as a solo exercise before moving onto navigation with your instructor.

Navigation is taught using a method called dead reckoning, using ground features to reference your position. You may also use radio navigation aids such as VOR to track your position and GPS devices are now being integrated into training.

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

You will complete several navigation exercises with your instructor and then fly them solo, building up to your Cross Country Qualifying Flight (QXC.) The QXC for PPL is 150 Nautical miles to include land aways at two aerodromes other than the one you started from. LAPL QXC is 80 NM with one land away.

This then builds up to the more advanced areas of the training and ensuring your skills are ready for test. You will initially do a mock test with a different instructor other than your own, before being recommended for test.

Skills Test

The skills test will be conducted by an external examiner and will take around 2 hours flight time to complete.

It usually starts with a thorough briefing of the aircrafts documents, weather, route, precautions etc. The examiner usually gives the the route a day or two before test.

This is an example of how the test will be conducted:

Pre flight preparation and planning

- Navigation section
- Diversion
- VOR tracking (PPL Only)
- General handling, stalls, PFL, steep turns, slow flight
- Instrument appreciation (PPL Only)
- Circuits and Circuit emergencies
- De brief and oral questions

Radio Telephony Test

The RTF test is a practical examination. This we have facility to do at our premises, so you will not need to go anywhere else. Once complete you are able to obtain the radio licence FRTOL.

Prior to the test the examiner will brief you on the simulated route of the flight of which you will need to do the communications, usually via walkie talkie.

There is likely to be a requirement to do a controlled airspace zone transit and MATZ (Military Air Traffic Zone) penetration, along with emergencies thrown into the mix. It is essential you are familiar with Pan Pan, Mayday and Mayday Relay situations. Don't worry these terms will make more sense as you get into the course.

Learning to fly FAQ

Is There an Age Limit for Flying Lessons?

Fourteen is the earliest you can start to log hours towards a licence. A student can fly solo at the age of sixteen and can hold a PPL or LAPL at seventeen. There is no upper limit, as long as you are fit and pass the medical you can keep flying.

Do I need any special qualifications to Fly a Plane? No

Do I Need Special Clothing? Just comfortable clothing of the sort you would use to drive a car and a warm jacket in winter for walking out to the aircraft. For ladies, no high heels please. They make rudder control very difficult and will damage the wing surfaces when you board. The aircraft have very effective heating for winter use. For summer they are not air-conditioned but have effective cooling air vents.

Will I Pay a set price for every lesson?

No – you only pay for the flying time (brakes off to brakes on).

Your ultimate guide to learning to fly PPL and LAPL (a) Explained

How long does it take before I can fly solo?

It varies on the individual, but between 14 and 20 hours of instruction is not unusual.

Will I have to pay any monies in advance?

No – you only pay for the flying time (brakes off to brakes on). Payment is due after the flight, unless you are a Fast Track student of which pay instalments to enable block booking.

What Sort of Aircraft Can I Learn to Fly In?

We have a Cessna 152 and a Robin 2160 both of which are 2 seat aircraft. In addition to this we have a PA28 and a Cessna 172 which are both 4 seat aircraft. All aircraft are available for training or private hire.

The aircraft type you learn in is personal choice, the 2 seater aircraft are smaller and therefore offer better economy. However the four seat aircraft are larger and offer more comfort especially for the larger framed person. All aircraft are excellent trainers in their own right.

Is learning to fly safe?

Aeroplanes are one of the safest forms of transport. All aircraft are inspected prior to each flight. They are checked and maintained regularly by licensed engineers in accordance with Civil Aviation Authority regulations. All our instructors are fully qualified commercial pilots, with extensive experience and expertise in the field of instruction. Periodically their licences are re-validated by authorised flight examiners.

Am I Insured when Flying with Almat Flying Academy?

You are covered under the aircraft insurance. Aircraft insurance documents can be viewed on request.

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Is Learning to Fly Difficult? Not really, but it does require high motivation and dedication.

Does the Weather Play a Major Role in Flying?

Yes, depending on your type of flight and nature of training. We adhere to the standards, rules and regulations as laid down by The Civil Aviation Authority to ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Will a Trial Flight count towards my training?

Yes, all trial lessons are conducted by the same instructors who teach towards the PPL and LAPL. Therefore all time gained through trial lessons will count should you decide to pursue a licence. All of our training and courses comply with CAA requirements.



Learning to fly is a huge achievement. Whether you chose to fly with us here or elsewhere, we hope you have found the information in this guide helpful. Should you need any further advice we are here to help.