



FLIGHT CREW LICENSING

Getting your recreational pilot licence (RPL)



Learn about the rules for recreational pilots—in effect since 1 September 2014. The full rules are contained in Part 61 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations.

Who should know about the rules for recreational pilots?

This information applies to you if:

- > you are interested in flying for recreational purposes
- > you are a student pilot and want to carry passengers
- > you hold a pilot certificate issued by Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) and want to obtain a CASA-issued licence.

Flight training organisation personnel should also be aware of the rules for recreational pilots.

What is a recreational pilot licence (RPL)?

A recreational pilot licence (RPL) is a flight crew licence introduced on 1 September 2014. It authorises pilots to fly light, single-engine aircraft as the pilot in command, independently of a flight training organisation, without supervision.

The RPL replaces the student pilot licence and general flying progress test (GFPT) that existed under the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988. It is also available to pilots who have an RA-Aus pilot certificate.

Before operating independently of a flight training organisation, new RPL holders should make sure they are fully aware of their new responsibilities. Initially, pilots need to complete a flight review with an instructor and make sure they are familiar with the new regulations and their responsibilities when exercising the privileges of their RPL.



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How can I get an RPL?

To obtain an RPL, you must be 16. For each category rating you want to obtain you need to:

- › complete the relevant flight training
- › undertake a general English language assessment (only required for the first category rating)
- › pass an RPL theory exam (this can be set and conducted by your flying school)
- › pass an RPL flight test
- › have at least 25 hours flying time including a minimum of 20 hours dual and five hours as pilot-in-command.

Training for your licence, ratings or endorsements (except design feature endorsements and flight activity endorsements) must be undertaken through a flying school which is authorised under Part 141 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations.

You need to have either a [Class 1 or 2 medical certificate](#) or a [recreational aviation medical practitioner's certificate](#) to take the RPL flight test.

What endorsements can be added to an RPL?

The following endorsements can be added to an RPL:

- › controlled aerodrome endorsement (RPCT)
- › controlled airspace endorsement (RPCA)
- › flight radio endorsement (RPFR)—this requires an aviation English language proficiency assessment
- › recreational navigation endorsement (RPNA)—this requires minimum flight time of five hours solo cross-country and a minimum of two hours dual instrument time, of which at least one hour is instrument flight time.



What limitations apply to the holder of an RPL?

Before using your RPL, you need to:

- › have a current flight review for the aircraft being flown (see CASA's [flight reviews](#) information sheet for more details)
- › meet the medical requirements
- › have conducted three take-offs and landings in the previous 90 days if you wish to carry passengers
- › have a Class 1 or 2 medical certificate to fly above 10,000 ft, or have another pilot with you who has a Class 1 or 2 medical certificate who is occupying a flight control seat in the aircraft and is authorised to pilot the aircraft.

Unless you hold a navigation endorsement you are also limited to flying within 25 nautical miles of your departure aerodrome, your flight training area and the route between your departure aerodrome and the flight training area.

You need to have a flight radio endorsement if you are going to use the aircraft radio during the flight.

If you want to fly in controlled airspace, you must also hold a controlled airspace endorsement.

If you want to fly at a controlled aerodrome, you must hold a controlled aerodrome endorsement.

What happens if I hold a student pilot licence and have passed a GFPT?

You are entitled to an RPL and appropriate aircraft category and class ratings.

The privileges of an RPL are broader than those of the SPL plus GFPT, which is why pilots need to complete a Part 61 aircraft rating flight review before they exercise the privileges of the RPL. This requirement also replaces the 15 hours and 90 day recent experience and dual flight check rules in the old regulations.

To obtain your new Part 61 licence, you need to complete the Part 61 licence [transition process](#). Pilots are encouraged to complete their Part 61 flight review prior to completing the transition process, although this is not essential. In any case, the need to complete the flight review applies regardless of whether you hold the new licence or are still using your old CAR Part 5 SPL.



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What are the new responsibilities of the RPL compared to the SPL plus GFPT?

If you are transferring across to an RPL you need to be aware of additional responsibilities including making decisions about your own flights (for example flight planning, go and no-go decisions and fuel planning), ensuring your aircraft is airworthy prior to flight and reporting airworthiness and safety issues and occurrences. If you already hold a flight radiotelephone operator licence you will be granted the flight radio endorsement under your new RPL licence.

I already hold a pilot certificate issued by RA-Aus. How do I obtain an RPL?

A pilot certificate is equivalent to an RPL. To get your RPL you need to complete an [application form](#) and follow the instructions on the form to provide evidence of your pilot certificate, submit a recent photograph and provide appropriate proof of your identity. You also need to undertake a [flight review](#) before you can use your licence.

Your new licence grants you the relevant category rating, aircraft class rating and design feature endorsements. You are also granted a recreational navigation endorsement if your pilot certificate authorises you to conduct cross-country flights and if you meet the minimum flight times.

Why has CASA changed the rules for RPLs?

The rules provide recognition for pilots who currently hold pilot certificates, and make it easier for pilots who want to fly recreationally but are not interested in obtaining a private pilot licence.



Can I fly a multi-engine aeroplane using my RPL?

No. You can only fly single-engine aircraft using your RPL. To fly a multi-engine aeroplane you need to obtain a [private pilot licence](#) and complete training and a flight test for the multi-engine aeroplane class rating.

Can I fly a turbine-powered helicopter if I hold an RPL (helicopters) and a single-engine helicopter class rating?

No. A pilot holding an RPL is not authorised to fly turbine or rocket-powered aircraft.

How many passengers can I carry?

If you have an RPL you can only carry one passenger. However, you can carry more than one passenger if you have a Class 1 or 2 medical certificate or if you have another pilot with you who is authorised to fly the aircraft, occupies a flight control seat and has a Class 1 or 2 medical certificate.

Can I fly at night?

If you have an RPL you can only fly solo at night if you are receiving training and are flying under the supervision of a flying school and flight instructor. You can't carry passengers on those flights.

Can I log pilot-in-command under supervision (PICUS) flight time?

No. PICUS is limited to multi-crew operations where you can be the pilot-in-command. The RPL privileges don't include being pilot-in-command of a multi-crew operation.

Can I use my RPL to fly in another country?

The RPL is not an International Civil Aviation Organization licence and is not recognised by other countries. To fly in another country you need to get approval from that country's aviation authority.



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Want to know more?

Visit the [licensing regulations](#) section.

The new rules for RPLs are contained in Part 61 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations:

- › **Division 61.E.1**—general limitations on the exercise of pilot licence privileges
- › **Subpart G (61.460 to 61.61.500)**—recreational pilot licences regulations
- › **Division 61.L.5**—pilot type ratings, flight reviews.
- › **Subregulation 61.112 (2)**—flying as a student pilot—authorisation to pilot a recreational aircraft at night under the VFR, or a non-recreational aircraft.