FLY
AVIATION

Training aid only, not flight instruction. Review it with your CFI and get their approval before you use it in training or in the airplane. Check every number against the POH and current FAA sources. Last reviewed Nov 12, 2026 against the ASA 2027 FAR/AIM update of Nov 11, 2026, eCFR and AIM Change 3.

TABBING THE FAR/AIM FOR THE CHECKRIDE

Private pilot checkride · 2027 FAR/AIM · Four-color tab system

THE SHORT ANSWER

A tabbed FAR/AIM is welcome on most checkrides. A tab that answers the question is not.

- **Write the location, never the answer.** A tab may carry the section number and its title as printed in the book, such as "91.155 Basic VFR wx minimums". It may not carry a number, a minimum, a time limit or a memory aid, such as "3 SM, 500 below".
- **No FAA rule covers tabs.** The FAA has no rule that says what may go on a tab. Each examiner sets their own policy and tells you at the pre-test briefing. **Ask yours when you schedule.**
- **The knowledge test is different.** No FAR/AIM, tabbed or not, goes into the computer knowledge test. You get only the FAA testing supplement the proctor hands you.
- **Bring the current book.** The practical test is held under the regulations in force on the day of the test. For a checkride from late 2026 through 2027, that means the 2027 edition plus the published updates.
- **Every rule is free on faa.gov and eCFR.** Each tab in our lists links to the official text, so you can read the current rule before you tab it. See Free official sources below.
- **Printable copy:** download this guide as a PDF (letter size, 14 pages) to tab from at the table.
- **Tabs only help you find things.** Examiners expect you to know the first area of the test (pilot qualifications: documents, currency, privileges) without the book, and won't let you look up in-flight answers such as right-of-way.

WHAT THE FAA ACTUALLY SAYS

The FAA has written rules about aids for the knowledge test. For the practical test, the examiner decides.

Test	What you may use	Source
Computer knowledge test	Only the FAA supplement book provided by the proctor, plus a plotter, navigation computer (E6B), basic calculator and blank log sheets. **Handwritten, printed or electronic written materials are not allowed**, so no FAR/AIM. The proctor makes the final call.	FAA ACS Companion Guide for Pilots; FAA Order 8080.6H
Practical test (oral and flight)	No FAA rule lists allowed references or says what may be marked in them. The examiner sets the policy. The test is held under the ACS and the regulations current on the date of the test, and oral questions continue through the whole test.	Private Pilot Airplane ACS (FAA-S-ACS-6C)
Which ACS applies	The Private Pilot Airplane ACS, FAA-S-ACS-6C (November 2023), is still the standard named in Appendix A to Part 61 as of ASA's November 11, 2026 update.	14 CFR Part 61, Appendix A

- Examiners' policies differ. Many allow any current official reference: the FAR/AIM, the FAA handbooks, the POH, current charts and the Chart Supplement, on paper or on a tablet. Some allow no personal notes at all. A Mississippi examiner writing in AOPA's Flight Training magazine (May 2022) allowed only official resources, banned personal notes, and wouldn't let applicants look up in-flight scenarios.
- A heavily marked book can count as personal notes. Keep yours clean enough that you'd be comfortable handing it to the examiner.

WHAT YOU MAY WRITE ON A TAB

Use this as your test for every tab: **could someone who has never read the regulation use your tab to answer a question?** If yes, the tab is a note, not a tab.

Generally fine	Not fine
The section or paragraph number: 61.57, 91.205, AIM 6-4-1	Numbers from the rule: "90 days", "3 T/O & LDG", "30 min day / 45 night"
The title as printed in the book, shortened: "Recent flight exp."	Weather minimums, cloud clearances, altitudes or speeds
A neutral topic word: "Equipment", "Inspections", "Lost comms"	Memory aids for the content, such as the required-equipment acronyms
The part name: "Part 68 BasicMed"	Expiration periods: "3rd class 60/24 mo."
Highlighting the rule's own words inside the book, in one color	Margin notes, explanations, stickies with answers, a cheat sheet taped inside the cover
The official printed FAR/AIM update tucked in at the change	Pages from commercial study guides or flash cards slipped into the book
Bookmarks in a current FAR/AIM app or PDF, named by section	App annotations or notes that hold answers

- **Write each title in the book's own words, shortened.** Our list below does that for you.
- **Highlighting the rule's own words** in the book is normal, and most examiners accept it. It's still the official text. Don't write in the margins.
- **Printed tab sets** that carry only section numbers and titles are fine on the same terms. Make your own anyway: finding each section is half the learning.
- **When in doubt, ask, and show the examiner your book at the briefing.** If they object to a tab, peel it off. A tab is never worth an argument.

What to ask your examiner when you schedule

- "May I use a tabbed and highlighted FAR/AIM? The tabs carry only section numbers and titles."
- "Do you accept the current FAR/AIM on a tablet or app, or do you want paper?"
- "Are there any references you don't allow, such as personal notes or my instructor's lesson plans?"

THE FOUR-COLOR SYSTEM

The colors tell you **where in the book** a tab is, so your hand goes to the right part of the book before your eyes find the number. Red is the exception: it marks emergency and accident topics wherever they fall.

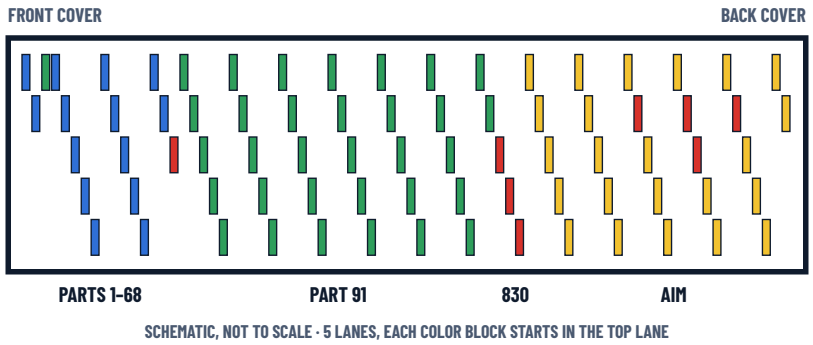
Color	What it marks	Where it sits in the book	About how many
Blue	The pilot: definitions, certificates, medicals, currency, privileges (14 CFR Parts 1, 61 and 68)	Front of the book	14
Green	The airplane and the flight: operating rules, airspace, weather minimums, equipment, inspections (Part 91, plus Part 43 preventive maintenance)	Part 91, the thickest block	33
Yellow	Procedures and good practice: lighting, markings, airspace, radio, weather, medical (the AIM and the Pilot/Controller Glossary)	Back half	23
Red	Emergencies and accidents: PIC emergency authority, lost comms, distress calls, NTSB reporting, NASA reports	Mixed in, wherever the topic falls	8

BLUE · THE PILOT

GREEN · THE AIRPLANE AND FLIGHT

YELLOW · AIM PROCEDURES

RED · EMERGENCIES AND ACCIDENTS



SCHEMATIC, NOT TO SCALE · 5 LANES, EACH COLOR BLOCK STARTS IN THE TOP LANE

- **Why by section and not by importance:** examiners ask questions in any order. Under pressure you want to know where to open the book, not how important the rule is. Importance is handled by the Core and Extra sets in the lists below.
- **Why red stands alone:** emergency rules are the ones you most need to find fast, and the ones examiners like to ask about. Bright red tabs scattered through the book are easy to spot.
- **About 78 tabs in all.** That is plenty. If you're short on time, put on the 44 marked **Core** first and add the Extra ones as you study.

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SUPPLIES AND SETUP

Get everything ready before you start, and do the tabbing in one or two sittings with your CFI's syllabus open beside you.

- **The book:** the ASA 2027 FAR/AIM, printed. ASA's book is current through May 5, 2026. Download ASA's free update from its FAR/AIM update page (the November 11, 2026 update was the latest when we wrote this) and check eCFR for anything newer.
- **Tabs:** write-on, repositionable tabs about 1 inch (25 mm) wide, in blue, green, yellow and red. Repositionable means you can move one when the examiner or a new edition needs it.
- **Pen:** a fine-tip permanent marker in black. Test it on one tab first so it doesn't smear.
- **One highlighter,** in a light color. Highlight only the words of the rule that do the work.
- **A lane card:** an index card with five marks along one edge, to set each tab at the same five heights.

Where the tabs go

- **On the open (fore) edge of the book**, about half the tab sticking out.
- **Five lanes, top to bottom.** Each new tab goes one lane lower than the last, then back to the top. Start each new color block in the top lane, so you can see where each part of the book begins.
- **Stick the tab to the page where the section starts.** If the section starts partway down a page, that's still the page.
- **Red tabs take the next lane** in the block they sit in, so they don't break the pattern.
- **ASA prints its own section markers** in the page margins. Set your tabs so they don't cover them.
- **Write the same text on both faces** of the tab, so you can read it with the book open from either side.

BLUE TABS: THE PILOT

Parts 1, 61 and 68. These cover the first area of the checkride, pilot qualifications, so know them cold and use the tabs only to confirm.

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
1.1	1.1 Definitions	What counts as "night", a "complex airplane" or "pilot in command"?	Core
1.2	1.2 Abbreviations	What does an abbreviation in a rule stand for?	Extra
61.3	61.3 Certificates required	What must you carry to act as pilot in command?	Core
61.15	61.15 Alcohol/drug offenses	What must you report after a DUI?	Extra
61.23	61.23 Medical: req. and duration	When does my medical expire? When is BasicMed allowed?	Core
61.31	61.31 Add'l training/endorsements	Which endorsements for complex, high-performance or tailwheel airplanes?	Core
61.51	61.51 Pilot logbooks	What must be logged, and what counts as PIC time?	Extra
61.53	61.53 Medical deficiency	May you fly with a cold, on medication, or with a new condition?	Extra
61.56	61.56 Flight review	When is a flight review due, and what is in it?	Core
61.57	61.57 Recent flight exp.	May you carry passengers today, by day or by night?	Core
61.60	61.60 Change of address	You moved. How long do you have to tell the FAA?	Extra
61.109	61.109 Aeronautical experience	Do you meet the hour requirements for the certificate?	Extra
61.113	61.113 Private privileges/limits	May you share costs, fly for your business, or be paid?	Core
Part 68	Part 68 BasicMed	What does BasicMed require and limit?	Core

GREEN TABS: THE AIRPLANE AND THE FLIGHT

Part 91, plus one tab in Part 43. This is the biggest block and the one you'll open most. Part 43 sits in front of Part 61 in the ASA book, so its single green tab lands inside the blue block. That's expected.

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
43 App. A	43 App. A Preventive maint.	What maintenance may a pilot-owner do?	Core
91.7	91.7 Airworthiness	Who decides the airplane is safe to fly?	Core
91.9	91.9 Flight manual/placards	What must be on board about limitations?	Core
91.17	91.17 Alcohol or drugs	How long between drinking and flying?	Extra
91.103	91.103 Preflight action	What must you know before every flight?	Core
91.107	91.107 Safety belts	When must passengers be briefed and belted?	Core
91.113	91.113 Right-of-way	Who gives way to whom?	Core
91.117	91.117 Aircraft speed	What are the speed limits by altitude and airspace?	Extra
91.119	91.119 Min. safe altitudes	How low may you fly over a town or open country?	Core
91.123	91.123 ATC clearances	When may you deviate from an ATC instruction?	Extra
91.125	91.125 ATC light signals	What does a light signal from the tower mean?	Extra
91.126	91.126 Class G airport ops	Which way are turns in the pattern at a non-towered field?	Extra
91.129	91.129 Class D	What do you need to enter Class D?	Extra
91.130	91.130 Class C	What do you need to enter Class C?	Extra
91.131	91.131 Class B	What do you need to enter Class B?	Core
91.137	91.137 TFRs	What is a TFR, and how do you find one?	Extra
91.151	91.151 VFR fuel	What fuel reserve is required?	Core
91.155	91.155 Basic VFR wx minimums	What visibility and cloud clearance does each airspace require?	Core
91.157	91.157 Special VFR	When can you ask for special VFR?	Core
91.159	91.159 VFR cruising altitude	What altitudes may you cruise at, by direction?	Extra
91.203	91.203 Certificates required	Which documents must be in the airplane?	Core
91.205	91.205 Equipment required	What instruments and equipment must work for day and night VFR?	Core

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
91.207	91.207 ELT	When must the ELT be inspected and its battery replaced?	Core
91.209	91.209 Aircraft lights	When must the position lights be on?	Core
91.211	91.211 Supplemental oxygen	When do the pilot and passengers need oxygen?	Extra
91.213	91.213 Inoperative equipment	May you fly with something broken?	Core
91.215	91.215 Transponder	Where is a transponder with altitude reporting required?	Core
91.225	91.225 ADS-B Out	Where is ADS-B Out required?	Core
91.403	91.403 Maint. general	Who is responsible for keeping the airplane airworthy? ADs?	Core
91.407	91.407 Op. after maintenance	Who flies the airplane after major work, and when?	Extra
91.409	91.409 Inspections	Which inspections are due, and how often?	Core
91.413	91.413 Transponder tests	How often must the transponder be checked?	Extra
91.417	91.417 Maintenance records	What must the logbooks show, and for how long?	Core

- **2027 change to the maintenance rules.** Sections 91.401 through 91.415 were reworded effective January 11, 2027 (Amendment 91-385), after the 2027 book went to print. The annual and 100-hour rules in 91.409(a) and (b) read the same as before, but 91.403 and 91.405 changed. Tuck ASA's printed update in at 91.401 and read it.

YELLOW TABS: THE AIM

The AIM is guidance and good practice, not regulation, but the oral leans on it for airport, airspace, radio, weather and medical questions. Paragraph numbers below match the current AIM (Change 3, effective July 9, 2026).

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
2-1-2	2-1-2 Visual glideslope (VASI/PAPI)	What do the PAPI lights mean?	Extra
2-1-8	2-1-8 Pilot-controlled lighting	How do you turn on the runway lights?	Extra
2-3-1	2-3-1 Markings	What does this runway or taxiway marking mean?	Core
2-3-7	2-3-7 Airport signs	What does this sign mean?	Core
3-1-4	3-1-4 Basic VFR wx minimums	The weather minimums table, all classes in one place	Core
3-2-1	3-2-1 Controlled airspace	What are Classes A to E like?	Extra
3-3-1	3-3-1 Class G	What is uncontrolled airspace like?	Extra
3-4-1	3-4-1 Special use airspace	Restricted area, MOA, alert area: what may you do?	Extra
3-5-1	3-5-1 Other airspace areas	TFRs, MTRs, parachute areas, VFR routes	Extra
4-1-9	4-1-9 Non-towered airport practices	What do you say, and when, at an airport without a tower?	Core
4-1-20	4-1-20 Transponder/ADS-B ops	Which code do you squawk, and when?	Extra
4-3-3	4-3-3 Traffic patterns	How do you enter and fly the pattern?	Core
4-3-13	4-3-13 Light signals	The light gun signal chart	Core
5-1-3	5-1-3 NOTAMs	Which NOTAMs exist, and where do you find them?	Extra
5-1-5	5-1-5 VFR flight plan	How do you file, open and close a VFR flight plan?	Extra
7-1-5	7-1-5 Preflight briefing	Standard, abbreviated or outlook briefing?	Extra
7-1-28	7-1-28 METAR/TAF key	How do you decode a METAR or TAF?	Core
7-4-1	7-4-1 Wake turbulence	How do you avoid wake turbulence?	Core
8-1-1	8-1-1 Fitness for flight	Are you fit to fly today?	Core
8-1-2	8-1-2 Effects of altitude	What is hypoxia, and what types are there?	Extra
8-1-5	8-1-5 Illusions	Which illusions affect landings and night flying?	Core
8-1-6	8-1-6 Vision in flight	How do you scan, by day and at night?	Extra

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
P/CG	P/CG Glossary	What does a term ATC used mean?	Extra

RED TABS: EMERGENCIES AND ACCIDENTS

Red tabs sit where the topic is in the book, so they show up inside the green and yellow blocks. Eight in all.

Tab (free official text)	Write on it	Question that sends you here	Set
91.3	91.3 PIC authority	May you break a rule in an emergency? Must you report it?	Core
830.2	830.2 NTSB definitions	Is this an accident, an incident, or serious injury?	Core
830.5	830.5 Immediate notification	What must be reported to the NTSB right away?	Core
830.15	830.15 Reports to file	When is a written report due?	Extra
AIM 4-2-13	4-2-13 Radio failure, tower	Your radio fails near a towered airport. Now what?	Core
AIM 6-3-1	6-3-1 Distress/urgency	How do you declare an emergency?	Extra
AIM 6-4-1	6-4-1 Two-way radio failure	What do you do if you lose the radio?	Core
AIM 7-7-1	7-7-1 ASRS (NASA report)	What does a NASA report do, and when must you file it?	Extra

- 830.10, preservation of wreckage, sits between 830.5 and 830.15. Your 830.5 tab gets you there.

STEP BY STEP

Plan on about two hours for the full set. Doing it with your CFI turns it into a ground lesson.

1. **Check the book is current.** Look at the edition year and the "current through" date in the front. Download the latest ASA update and skim it for anything you'll tab.
2. **Ask your examiner** about their reference policy (see the questions above). Adjust before you tab, not after.
3. **Work front to back, one color at a time.** Find each section by its number, using the table of contents and the index, not this list's order alone. Finding it is the study.
4. **Read each section before you tab it.** Highlight only the words of the rule that do the work. No margin notes.
5. **Write the tab** with the text from our "Write on it" column: section number first, then a short title. Block capitals are easiest to read.
6. **Stick it on** at the next lane down, using the lane card. Start each new color block at the top lane.

7. **Check every tab** against the lists: right section, right color, readable from both faces, not covering ASA's printed markers.
8. **Drill it** (see below) until you can find any tab in about 10 seconds.
9. **Before the checkride,** take out stickies, scrap paper and anything that isn't the official text. Bring the book to the briefing and offer to show it.

PRACTICING THE LOOKUP

Tabs only help if your hand already knows where to go. Practice with a partner or your CFI for ten minutes a day in the last two weeks before the checkride.

- **The 10-second drill:** your partner reads a question from the "Question that sends you here" column. You name the color, open the book and put your finger on the section. Aim for 10 seconds.
- **Answer first, then look:** say your answer out loud, then open the book to confirm it. That's how you should use the book on the checkride.
- **Know which ones you won't get to look up:** right-of-way, emergencies in flight, light signals and the radio-failure squawk come up as in-flight scenarios. Know them from memory.
- **Tablet users:** practice the same drill in your FAR/AIM app or PDF. Make sure it's the current edition and you know how to search it quickly.

AFTER THE CHECKRIDE

- **Next year's book needs new tabs.** Page numbers change each edition, so tab the new book fresh. Your tab list carries over, with a few changes for any new rules.
- **Keep tabbing as you go on.** The instrument and commercial checkrides use the same system: add tabs in the same colors for Part 61 subparts, Part 91 IFR rules and AIM Chapter 5.
- The rules themselves, in plain language, are in Regulations for Private Pilots. Practice questions are in the Oral Exam Prep.

FREE OFFICIAL SOURCES ON FAA.GOV

Everything the checkride is built on is free from the FAA. Use these to check a rule is current, to read past the tab, and for the references examiners accept.

What	Where	Use it for
The regulations (14 CFR), always current	ecfr.gov/current/title-14	Check any Part 1, 43, 61, 68 or 91 section against your book. Every blue and green tab above links straight to its section.
FAA regulations hub	faa.gov/regulations_policies/faa_regulations	The FAA's starting point for current and historical rules
NTSB Part 830	ecfr.gov: 49 CFR Part 830	Accident and incident reporting (the red NTSB tabs)

What	Where	Use it for
Aeronautical Information Manual	faa.gov AIM (HTML)	The current AIM by chapter and paragraph. Every yellow and AIM red tab above links to its paragraph.
Pilot/Controller Glossary	faa.gov P/CG	What an ATC term means
Airman Certification Standards	faa.gov/training_testing/testing/acs	The Private Pilot ACS (FAA-S-ACS-6C): every task and the references for each one
ACS Companion Guide for Pilots	faa.gov ACS Companion Guide (PDF)	How the tests run, and what you may bring to the knowledge test
Knowledge testing supplements	faa.gov/training_testing/testing/supplements	The figure book you'll be handed at the knowledge test
FAA handbooks	faa.gov handbooks and manuals	Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge, Airplane Flying Handbook, Aviation Weather Handbook and more, as free PDFs
Advisory circulars	faa.gov/regulations_policies/advisory_circulars	The FAA's explanations of how to meet a rule
BasicMed	faa.gov BasicMed	Current BasicMed requirements, including the 2024 changes
Charts and the Chart Supplement	faa.gov digital products	Free current sectionals, the Chart Supplement and airport diagrams
FAA Safety Team	faasafety.gov	Free courses and WINGS credit

- **The book is still the one to tab.** These sites are where you check that the book is current and read further. If your examiner accepts digital references, bookmark the same sections in your browser or app, in the same four colors if your app allows.
- **eCFR beats any printed book on currency.** If a section in your book doesn't match eCFR, eCFR is the law today.

SELF-CHECK: WHERE WOULD YOU LOOK?

Tap a question to see which tab to reach for. The answers give the location, just like your tabs.

– **The examiner asks when your third-class medical expires.**

Blue, 61.23. Know the answer cold; the tab is only for confirming.

A friend offers to pay for all the fuel on a trip you're taking together.

Blue, 61.113 (private pilot privileges and limitations).

The tail strobe is inoperative. May you fly tonight?

Green: 91.205 for night VFR equipment, then 91.213 for inoperative equipment.

What visibility and cloud clearance do you need in Class E below 10,000 feet?

Green 91.155, or yellow AIM 3-1-4 for the same minimums in one table.

Is the ELT inspection current?

Green, 91.207. Then check the airplane's logbooks, which 91.417 covers.

Your passenger breaks a wrist climbing out after landing. Must you call the NTSB?

Red, 830.2 for the definition of serious injury, then 830.5 for immediate notification.

Your radio quits while you're inbound to a towered airport.

Red, AIM 4-2-13, then the tower light signals at yellow 4-3-13. Know the basics from memory; the examiner may not let you look this one up.

What do you need to enter the Detroit Class B?

Green, 91.131, with 91.215 and 91.225 for the transponder and ADS-B Out.

How do you enter the traffic pattern at a non-towered airport?

Yellow, AIM 4-3-3, with 4-1-9 for the radio calls and green 91.126 for turn direction.

What may you do yourself to the airplane as a pilot-owner?

Green, Part 43 Appendix A (preventive maintenance), plus 91.417 for the logbook entry.

Does a cold medicine ground you?

Blue 61.53, with yellow AIM 8-1-1 for the medication guidance.

The examiner asks whether a tab may say "3 SM, 1,000 above, 500 below, 2,000 horizontal."

No. That's the answer, not the location. Write "91.155 Basic VFR wx minimums" instead.

SOURCES

- FAA Private Pilot for Airplane Category Airman Certification Standards, FAA-S-ACS-6C (November 2023), and 14 CFR Part 61 Appendix A.
- FAA ACS Companion Guide for Pilots (acceptable and unacceptable knowledge test materials) and FAA Order 8080.6H, Conduct of Airman Knowledge Tests.
- FAA Aeronautical Information Manual, Change 3, effective July 9, 2026 (paragraph numbers).
- eCFR, Title 14 and 49 CFR Part 830: section titles and links.
- ASA 2027 FAR/AIM (current through May 5, 2026) and ASA's 2027 FAR/AIM Update dated November 11, 2026.
- "No Googling allowed," AOPA Flight Training, May 2022, by a designated pilot examiner, on what examiners allow.
- The tab lists, colors and drills are our own. Examiners' policies differ and rules change: confirm with your examiner and CFI, and check section numbers against your own edition and eCFR.

Training aid only, not flight instruction. The POH in the airplane and its placards win: check every number against them, and fly with your CFI.