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 7, 2026 against eCFR (14 CFR Parts 61 and 91, 49 CFR 830).

REGULATIONS FOR PRIVATE PILOTS

Private pilot checkride · 14 CFR Parts 61 and 91 · NTSB 830

HOW THE RULES ARE ORGANIZED

The Federal Aviation Regulations are Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR). A handful of parts cover almost everything a private pilot does.

Part	What it covers	You'll use it for
Part 1	Definitions and abbreviations	What "night", "pilot in command" and "complex airplane" mean
Part 61	Pilot certificates, ratings, endorsements and currency	What you may do, and what keeps you legal
Part 67 and Part 68	Medical certificates (67) and BasicMed (68)	Which medical you need and how long it lasts
Part 91	General operating and flight rules	Almost every rule in the air and on the ground
Part 43	Maintenance	What a pilot-owner may fix (preventive maintenance)
Part 39	Airworthiness directives	Mandatory fixes for known problems
49 CFR Part 830 (NTSB)	Accident and incident reporting	What to report, to whom, and when

- **The regulations are the law.** The AIM (Aeronautical Information Manual) is guidance and good practice. The Chart Supplement, NOTAMs and advisory circulars fill in the details.
- Section numbers read as part and section: **91.155** is Part 91, section 155. On the oral, it helps to know where to look, not to recite every word.

CERTIFICATES AND DOCUMENTS

When you act as pilot in command, three documents must be on you, in your possession and ready to show.

- **Pilot certificate** (61.3(a)). A student pilot carries the student certificate.

- **Government-issued photo ID**, such as a driver's license or passport (61.3(a)(2)).
- **Medical certificate**, or the BasicMed paperwork (61.3(c), 61.23).
- You must show them on request to the FAA, the NTSB, the TSA or law enforcement (61.3(l)).

Medical certificates (61.23)

A private pilot needs at least a third-class medical, or BasicMed. How long it lasts depends on your age on the date of the exam.

Medical	Under 40 at the exam	40 or older at the exam
Third class (private pilot privileges)	60 calendar months	24 calendar months
Second class (commercial privileges)	12 calendar months	12 calendar months
First class (airline transport privileges)	12 calendar months	6 calendar months

- A first- or second-class medical drops down and keeps working as a lower class until the third-class period runs out.
- **Calendar months** run to the last day of the month. A third-class issued March 10 at age 30 is good until March 31, five years later.
- **No flying with a known medical deficiency** that would make you unable to meet the medical standards (61.53), even with a valid certificate.

BasicMed (61.23(c)(3), 61.113(i), Part 68)

BasicMed lets you fly without an FAA medical if you meet its conditions. The core rules have been stable since 2017; Congress widened the aircraft limits in 2024, so check the current text before you rely on the numbers below.

- You must have held an FAA medical certificate at any time after July 14, 2006, and it can't have been revoked or your last application denied.
- A physical exam with any state-licensed physician, using the FAA checklist, **every 48 months**.
- An online medical education course **every 24 calendar months**.
- Long-standing aircraft and flight limits: no more than 6 seats and 6,000 lb max takeoff weight, no more than 5 passengers, at or below 18,000 MSL, at or below 250 knots, and not for compensation or hire. The 2024 FAA Reauthorization raised the seat and weight limits; confirm the current figures on eCFR or the FAA BasicMed page.

PRIVILEGES AND LIMITS OF A PRIVATE PILOT

A private pilot may fly for fun, for travel, and for their own business, but not for pay. The details are in 61.113.

- **No compensation or hire.** You may not act as pilot in command of an aircraft carrying passengers or property for compensation or hire, and you may not be paid to act as PIC (61.113(a)).
- **Business flights:** you may fly for business if the flight is only incidental to that business and the aircraft isn't carrying passengers or property for compensation (61.113(b)).

- **Cost sharing:** you may not pay less than your pro rata share of the operating expenses of a flight with passengers. Those expenses are fuel, oil, airport fees and rental fees only (61.113(c)). You and your passengers must share a common purpose for the trip; you can't advertise a flight and take strangers along to cover costs. The FAA reads this rule narrowly.
- **Narrow exceptions** cover charitable, nonprofit or community events (with conditions in 61.113(d)), search and location operations (61.113(e)), aircraft salespeople with at least 200 hours (61.113(f)), and a few others. Ask a CFI before you rely on any of them.
- **Student pilots** (61.89): no passengers, no flights for business or compensation, no flight in less than 3 SM visibility by day (5 SM at night), no flight without visual reference to the surface, and only with the endorsements the student holds. A student flies solo only with a current solo endorsement for that make and model.
- To understand how our airplane's insurance and the student rules interact, see the Cherokee 140 Transition Guide.

CURRENCY AND RECENCY

Holding a certificate isn't enough. You must also be current to act as PIC, and current in a different way to carry passengers.

Requirement	Rule	Section
Flight review	1 hour of ground training and 1 hour of flight training with a CFI, endorsed in your logbook, within the previous **24 calendar months**. A new certificate or rating, or a phase of WINGS, also counts	61.56
Passengers, day	**3 takeoffs and 3 landings** within the preceding **90 days**, as sole manipulator of the controls, in the same category and class (and type, if a type rating is required)	61.57(a)
Tailwheel passengers	The 3 landings must be **to a full stop** in a tailwheel airplane	61.57(a)(1)(ii)
Passengers, night	**3 takeoffs and 3 landings to a full stop** within the preceding 90 days, done during the period **from 1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise**	61.57(b)
Address change	Tell the FAA within **30 days** of moving, or you may not exercise your certificate's privileges after that	61.60

- **Three kinds of "night".** Night for logging and equipment (Part 1): end of evening civil twilight to beginning of morning civil twilight. Position lights required (91.209): sunset to sunrise. Night passenger currency (61.57(b)): 1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise.
- The night landings for 61.57(b) count for day currency too.
- You can fly solo while not passenger-current; you just can't take anyone with you.

ENDORSEMENTS

Some airplanes need a one-time logbook endorsement from a CFI before you can act as PIC (61.31). None of these are needed in our Cherokee 140.

Endorsement	When it's required	Section
Complex	Retractable landing gear, flaps and a controllable-pitch propeller (or a FADEC engine)	61.31(e)
High performance	An engine of more than 200 horsepower	61.31(f)
Tailwheel	A tailwheel (conventional gear) airplane	61.31(i)
High altitude	A pressurized airplane with a service ceiling or max operating altitude above 25,000 MSL	61.31(g)

- Student pilots need separate endorsements for solo, solo cross-country, Class B airspace and each Class B airport they land at (61.87, 61.93, 61.95).

OPERATING RULES (PART 91)

These are the rules you'll apply on every flight. Each has a short summary here; the regulation itself is the authority.

Before the flight

- **PIC authority (91.3).** The pilot in command is directly responsible for, and is the final authority on, the operation of the aircraft. In an emergency you may deviate from any rule to the extent needed. If asked, you must send a written report.
- **Preflight action (91.103).** Become familiar with all available information. For a flight not in the vicinity of an airport, that includes weather reports and forecasts, fuel requirements, alternatives if the flight can't be completed, and known ATC delays. For every flight: runway lengths at airports of intended use, and takeoff and landing distance data. (Memory aid: **NWKRAFT**.)
- **Alcohol and drugs (91.17).** No flying within **8 hours** after drinking alcohol, while under the influence, with a blood alcohol of **0.04** or more, or while using any drug that affects your faculties against safety. You may not carry a visibly intoxicated passenger except in an emergency or as a medical patient under care.
- **Seat belts (91.107).** Brief each passenger on how to fasten and unfasten the belt and shoulder harness. Each person 2 years or older must be belted for taxi, takeoff and landing.
- **Careless or reckless operation (91.13).** No careless or reckless operation that endangers life or property, in the air or on the ground. This is the catch-all rule.
- **Airworthiness (91.7).** The PIC decides whether the aircraft is safe to fly, and must end the flight when an unairworthy condition comes up.

In the air

- **Right-of-way (91.113).**
  - An aircraft in distress has the right of way over all others.
  - **Converging** at about the same altitude: the aircraft on the **right** has the right of way. But a balloon has it over a glider, a glider over an airship, and an airship over an airplane. An aircraft towing or refueling another has it over all other engine-driven aircraft.
  - **Head-on:** both alter course to the **right**.
  - **Overtaking:** the aircraft being overtaken has the right of way. Pass well clear, on its **right**.
  - **Landing:** aircraft on final or landing have the right of way over aircraft in flight or on the ground. Between two landing aircraft, the **lower** one has it, but may not use that to cut in front of another on final.
  - Whatever the rule, everyone must **see and avoid**.
- **Minimum safe altitudes (91.119).**
  - **Anywhere:** an altitude that allows an emergency landing without undue hazard to people or property below if the engine fails.
  - **Congested areas:** 1,000 ft above the highest obstacle within 2,000 ft horizontally.
  - **Other areas:** 500 ft above the surface.
  - **Open water or sparsely populated areas:** no closer than 500 ft to any person, vessel, vehicle or structure.
  - Takeoff and landing are excepted.
- **Altimeter settings (91.121).** Below 18,000 MSL: the current setting of a station within 100 nm along the route. At or above 18,000 MSL: 29.92.
- **Speed limits (91.117).**
  - 250 KIAS below 10,000 MSL.
  - 200 KIAS at or below 2,500 AGL within 4 nm of the primary airport of Class C or D airspace.
  - 200 KIAS under a Class B shelf or in a VFR corridor through Class B.
- **VFR fuel (91.151).** Enough fuel to fly to the first point of intended landing and then at normal cruise for **30 minutes by day** or **45 minutes at night**.
- **VFR weather minimums (91.155).** Summary below. The Airspace Study Guide has the full table with the Class G night rules.
- **VFR cruising altitudes (91.159).** In level cruise more than 3,000 ft AGL: magnetic course 0–179°, odd thousands plus 500 (3,500, 5,500). Magnetic course 180–359°, even thousands plus 500 (4,500, 6,500).
- **Supplemental oxygen (91.211).** Cabin pressure altitude above 12,500 up to 14,000 MSL: required crew must use oxygen for any time over 30 minutes. Above 14,000: required crew must use it the whole time. Above 15,000: each occupant must be provided with oxygen.
- **Dropping objects (91.15).** Nothing may be dropped that creates a hazard to people or property. You may drop things if you take reasonable precautions.
- **Formation flight (91.111).** Not so close as to create a collision hazard. Formation only by arrangement with the PIC of each aircraft, and never with passengers for hire.

- **Aerobatics (91.303).** No aerobatic flight over a congested area or open-air assembly of people; within Class B, C or D airspace or a Class E surface area; within 4 nm of a federal airway's centerline; below 1,500 AGL; or with flight visibility under 3 SM.
- **Parachutes (91.307).** With a passenger aboard, no bank over **60°** or pitch over **30°** nose up or down unless everyone wears an approved parachute. The exceptions are flight tests and flight instruction by a CFI on maneuvers required for a certificate or rating, such as spins.

VFR weather minimums at a glance (91.155)

These are the minimums below 10,000 MSL that a Cherokee pilot uses most.

Airspace	Visibility	Distance from clouds
Class B	3 SM	Clear of clouds
Class C or D	3 SM	500 below, 1,000 above, 2,000 horizontal
Class E below 10,000 MSL	3 SM	500 below, 1,000 above, 2,000 horizontal
Class G, 1,200 AGL or less, day	1 SM	Clear of clouds
Class G, more than 1,200 AGL, day	1 SM	500 below, 1,000 above, 2,000 horizontal

- **Inside a surface area** of Class B, C, D or E, no VFR takeoff, landing, pattern entry or flight under the ceiling unless the ceiling is at least **1,000 ft** and ground visibility at least **3 SM** (91.155(c), (d)). Below that, you need special VFR (91.157).

Equipment and signals

- **Transponder and ADS-B Out (91.215, 91.225).** Required in Class A, B and C airspace; within 30 nm of a Class B primary airport from the surface to 10,000 MSL (the **Mode C veil**); above the ceiling of Class B or C up to 10,000 MSL; and in Class E at or above 10,000 MSL, except at or below 2,500 AGL.
- **ATC light gun signals (91.125).**

Signal	On the ground	In the air
Steady green	Cleared for takeoff	Cleared to land
Flashing green	Cleared to taxi	Return for landing (to be followed by steady green)
Steady red	Stop	Give way to other aircraft and continue circling
Flashing red	Taxi clear of the runway in use	Airport unsafe, do not land
Flashing white	Return to the starting point on the airport	Not used
Alternating red and green	Exercise extreme caution	Exercise extreme caution

- **ELT (91.207).** Most airplanes must carry one. Inspect it every **12 calendar months**. Replace or recharge the battery after more than **1 hour** of cumulative use, or when **50%** of its useful life (or useful life of charge, for a rechargeable battery) has expired. Training flights within 50 nm of the airport are an exception to carrying one.

AIRCRAFT REQUIREMENTS

The PIC must know what the airplane needs to be legal to fly today. The rules come down to equipment, inspections, directives and paperwork.

Required equipment for VFR (91.205)

Every item required by 91.205 must be working for the flight. Memory aids help, but the regulation is the list.

Day VFR (memory aid A TOMATO FLAMES)	Notes
Airspeed indicator	
Tachometer for each engine	
Oil pressure gauge	For each engine using a pressure system
Manifold pressure gauge	Only for each altitude engine; not ours
Altimeter	
Temperature gauge	For each liquid-cooled engine; not ours
Oil temperature gauge	For each air-cooled engine
Fuel gauge	Shows the quantity in each tank
Landing gear position indicator	Only for retractable gear; not ours
Anticollision lights	For small airplanes certificated after March 11, 1996
Magnetic direction indicator (compass)	
ELT	As required by 91.207
Seat belts and shoulder harnesses	Shoulder harnesses for front seats are required on small airplanes built after July 18, 1978

Night VFR adds (memory aid FLAPS)	Notes
Fuses	One spare set, or three of each kind, if the airplane uses fuses rather than breakers
Landing light	Only if the flight is for hire
Anticollision light system	Approved red or white, on all U.S.-registered civil aircraft
Position lights	Red, green and white navigation lights
Source of electricity	Adequate for all installed electrical and radio equipment

- Check the airplane's own equipment list and the kinds-of-operations list in the POH too. Some airplanes require more than 91.205.
- An inoperative anticollision light (strobe or beacon) means no night flight. By day, work through 91.213(d) below: our 1975 airplane predates the 1996 day requirement, so it may be deferred if the equipment list allows it.

Flying with something broken (91.213(d))

Our Cherokee has no minimum equipment list (MEL). Without one, you may fly with an inoperative instrument or item only if all four are true:

1. It isn't part of the equipment required for the airplane's VFR-day type certification.
2. It isn't required by 91.205, by any other rule for the kind of flight you're making, or by the airplane's equipment list or kinds-of-operations list.
3. It isn't required by an airworthiness directive.
4. It is **removed**, or **deactivated and placarded "Inoperative"**. If deactivating it is maintenance, a mechanic does it and records it.
5. Then the pilot (or a mechanic) must decide that it doesn't create a hazard on this flight. If any check fails, the airplane doesn't go.

Inspections

Count the inspections by calendar month: one that's due in June is good through June 30. The memory aid is **AVIATES**.

Inspection	When	Section
Annual	Every **12 calendar months**, by an A&P with Inspection Authorization	91.409(a)
VOR check	Within 30 days, only for IFR	91.171
Inspection, 100-hour	Every 100 hours of time in service, **only** if the airplane carries anyone for hire or is provided by the person giving flight instruction for hire. You may run 10 hours over to reach a place where it can be done; those hours count toward the next one	91.409(b)
Airworthiness directives	As each AD requires	91.403, Part 39
Transponder	Every **24 calendar months**	91.413

Inspection	When	Section
ELT	Every **12 calendar months**	91.207
Static system and altimeter	Every **24 calendar months**, only for IFR in controlled airspace	91.411

- **An annual counts as a 100-hour**, but a 100-hour doesn't count as an annual.

Airworthiness directives, records and pilot maintenance

- **ADs (91.403, Part 39)** are mandatory. The owner or operator is responsible for keeping the airplane airworthy, including AD compliance. Some ADs are one-time; others recur by hours or calendar time.
- **Maintenance records (91.417)** must show the status of every AD that applies (number, revision date, method of compliance, and the next due time for recurring ones), plus total time in service, life-limited parts and current inspection status.
- **Preventive maintenance (14 CFR 43.3(g), Part 43 Appendix A).** A pilot with at least a private certificate may do the small jobs on Appendix A list (oil changes, tire servicing, replacing landing light bulbs, some panel and upholstery items) on an airplane they own or operate that isn't used for hire. Log each job with the date, a description, your signature, certificate number and kind of certificate (43.9). Our owners' rule: check with the airplane's maintenance shop before you touch anything.

Documents in the airplane (ARROW)

The memory aid for documents is **ARROW**.

- Airworthiness certificate, displayed where passengers and crew can see it (91.203).
- Registration certificate (91.203). Registrations issued since early 2023 are good for 7 years; check the expiration date on the card.
- Radio station license: only for flights outside the United States.
- Operating limitations: the POH or AFM, placards and markings (91.9).
- Weight and balance data, current for this airplane.
- The logbooks stay out of the airplane, but you must be able to find the inspection status in them.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS (49 CFR PART 830)

Accidents and some incidents go to the NTSB (not the FAA), and some must be reported **immediately**.

Definitions (830.2)

- **Aircraft accident:** an occurrence between the time anyone boards with the intention of flight and the time everyone has gotten off, in which anyone dies or is **seriously injured**, or the aircraft has **substantial damage**.
- **Serious injury:** hospitalization for more than 48 hours (starting within 7 days of the injury); a broken bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes or nose); severe bleeding or nerve, muscle or tendon damage; injury to an internal organ; or second- or third-degree burns over more than 5% of the body.

- **Substantial damage:** damage or failure that hurts the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics and would normally need major repair or replacement. A ground-damaged propeller, dented skin, small punctures or a damaged wingtip or tire usually don't count.

Notify the NTSB immediately (830.5)

Notify the NTSB right away after an **accident**, and after any of these **incidents**:

- A flight control system malfunction or failure.
- A crewmember unable to do normal duties because of injury or illness.
- An in-flight fire.
- A collision in flight.
- Damage to property other than the aircraft estimated at more than **$25,000**.
- An aircraft that is overdue and believed to have been in an accident.
- (Several more apply to turbine engines, large airplanes and airline operations.)

After the event

- **Keep the wreckage (830.10).** Don't move or disturb the aircraft, its parts, cargo or records until the NTSB takes custody. You may move things only to remove people, protect the wreckage from more damage, or protect the public.
- **Written report (830.15).** File NTSB Form 6120.1 within **10 days** after an accident, or within 7 days if an overdue aircraft is still missing. For an incident, file a report only if the NTSB asks for one.

RULES WE USE MOST AT KONZ

KONZ is non-towered and sits under the Detroit Class B, inside its Mode C veil. These are the rules that come up every flight.

- **Traffic pattern (91.126).** At a non-towered airport, make all turns to the **left** unless the airport shows right traffic. At KONZ, Runway 22 is left traffic and Runway 4 is **right** traffic. Radio calls aren't required by regulation, but use the CTAF every time.
- **Right-of-way in the pattern (91.113).** The aircraft on final has the right of way. The lower aircraft on final does too, but don't use it to cut in.
- **Class B (91.131).** You need an explicit clearance ("cleared into the Class Bravo") before entering, plus a transponder with altitude reporting and ADS-B Out. Student pilots need specific endorsements. Know the shelf floors above and around KONZ on the Detroit Terminal Area Chart.
- **Mode C veil (91.215, 91.225).** Within 30 nm of DTW, from the surface up to 10,000 MSL, the transponder (in altitude mode) and ADS-B Out must be on and working.
- **Speed under the shelf (91.117).** 200 KIAS under a Class B shelf; the Cherokee is well below that, but know the rule for the test.
- **Fuel (91.151).** 30 minutes of reserve by day is the legal minimum. Plan more.
- The field itself is in the KONZ Airport Guide.

SELF-CHECK

Tap a question to see the answer. More questions are in the Private Pilot Oral Exam Prep.

What three documents must you have on you to act as PIC?

Your pilot certificate, a government-issued photo ID, and your medical certificate or BasicMed documents (61.3).

You got a third-class medical at age 38 on May 5. When does it expire for private pilot privileges?

At the end of May, 60 calendar months later: May 31, five years on (61.23).

Your passenger offers to pay for all the fuel on a trip you're both taking. Can you accept?

No. You must pay at least your pro rata share of fuel, oil, airport fees and rental. Two people on board means you pay at least half (61.113(c)).

When must you have done three takeoffs and landings to a full stop to carry passengers at night?

Within the preceding 90 days, during the period from 1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise (61.57(b)).

How often is a flight review required, and what is it?

Every 24 calendar months: at least 1 hour of ground training and 1 hour of flight training with a CFI, endorsed in your logbook (61.56).

Two airplanes converge at the same altitude. Who has the right of way?

The aircraft on the right (91.113(d)), unless one is in distress or is a category with priority, such as a balloon or glider.

What is the minimum altitude over a congested area?

1,000 ft above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius of 2,000 ft (91.119(b)).

What fuel reserve is required for a day VFR flight?

Enough to reach the first point of intended landing plus 30 minutes at normal cruise. At night, 45 minutes (91.151).

Your airplane is used only by its owners, never for hire. Which inspections must be current?

The annual (12 calendar months), the transponder (24 calendar months), the ELT (12 calendar months) and all applicable ADs. No 100-hour, since it isn't used for hire or instruction for hire. The static system and altimeter check matters only for IFR.

The tail strobe is inoperative. Can you fly at night?

No. An approved anticollision light system is required equipment for night VFR (91.205(c)). By day, our 1975 airplane can fly with it inoperative if it passes the 91.213(d) checks and is placarded.

– **Walk through how you'd decide to fly with an inoperative item under 91.213(d).**

Is it required for VFR-day type certification, by 91.205 or another rule, by the equipment list, or by an AD? If none, remove it or deactivate and placard it "Inoperative", and decide it's not a hazard. Otherwise, don't fly.

– **A passenger breaks a wrist getting out of the airplane after a normal landing. Is this an NTSB accident?**

It can be. The definition runs until everyone has gotten off, and a broken wrist is a serious injury (it's not a finger, toe or nose). Notify the NTSB immediately and file a report within 10 days.

– **Which incidents must you report to the NTSB immediately?**

Among others: a flight control malfunction or failure, a crewmember unable to perform duties, an in-flight fire, a midair collision, property damage over $25,000, or an overdue aircraft believed to be in an accident (830.5).

– **What must you do before entering the Detroit Class B from KONZ?**

Get an explicit clearance into the Class Bravo from ATC, and have a working transponder with altitude reporting and ADS-B Out (91.131, 91.215, 91.225).

– **You moved. How long do you have to tell the FAA?**

30 days. After that you may not exercise your certificate's privileges until you notify them (61.60).

SOURCES

- 14 CFR Parts 1, 39, 43, 61, 67, 68 and 91, as published on eCFR (ecfr.gov).
- 49 CFR Part 830, Notification and Reporting of Aircraft Accidents or Incidents.
- FAA Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM), Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge, and the Private Pilot – Airplane ACS.
- Regulations change. Check the current text on eCFR before you rely on any number here, and ask your CFI when a rule isn't clear.

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.