



Pilot



Entry requirements:

To begin training as a pilot, you'll need a minimum of five GCSEs and two A-levels. The training requires a good level of understanding of **maths** and **physics** and so any qualifications that demonstrate this may be an advantage.

A degree or postgraduate qualification is **not** required, although some people may choose to take one to make them stand out from the crowd (e.g. Aviation Management, /Aviation Technology).

These courses can help start you off in flying as they typically cover the theoretical work you'll need for a private pilot's licence. Flying lessons may be available but they'll be at an additional cost.

In order to work as an airline (commercial) pilot you must hold an Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL). This qualification is known as a 'frozen ATPL' and becomes 'unfrozen' when a certain number of hours and experience have been achieved.

It's important, when considering routes into the career, that you choose the right one for you. The two main ways to achieve an ATPL are as follows:

- **Integrated course** - this is an intensive, full-time course, which takes around 18 months to complete. The course is carried out with a flight training provider and is a mixture of classroom theory work and practical flying. Costs for this route are expensive and typically range from £80,000 to £90,000.
- **Modular training** - this is offered by the same training providers and covers the same topics and examinations as the integrated route but can be carried out in chunks, allowing you to complete sections as you can afford them and work in between if needed.

Skills required:

You will need to show:

- an understanding of maths and physics
- an ability to understand technical information, as pilots need to know how their aircraft works
- excellent spatial awareness and coordination
- good communication skills
- team-working skills
- the ability to think quickly and make decisions in difficult situations
- the capacity to remain calm under pressure
- discipline, self-confidence and commitment
- leadership skills, with the ability to give clear commands to cabin crew and passengers.
- route is still expensive and involves more self-study.

What you will do:

- make sure all information on the route, weather, passengers and aircraft is received
- use that information to create a flight plan, which details the altitude for the flight, route to be taken and amount of fuel required
- ensure the fuel levels balance safety with economy and supervise the loading and fuelling of the aircraft
- make sure all safety systems are working properly
- carry out pre-flight checks on the navigation and operating systems
- communicate with air traffic control before take-off and during flight and landing
- ensure noise regulations are followed during take-off and landing
- understand and interpret data from instruments and controls
- make regular checks on the aircraft's technical performance and position, on weather conditions and air traffic during flight
- react quickly and appropriately to environmental changes and emergencies
- update the aircraft logbook and write a report at the end of the flight, noting any incidents or problems with the aircraft.

What you will earn:

Salaries depend on the airline, the type of aircraft you're flying and your experience.

- Starting salaries for newly qualified first officers, working for a small operation, may be around £24,000. Starting salaries in larger companies can reach £28,000.
- Salaries for more experienced pilots can range from £36,000 to £48,000 in a first officer role.
- The starting salary for a captain with a medium-sized airline may range from £57,000 to £78,000. Those employed by major operators can earn £97,000 to more than £140,000.

These figures are a guide.

Working hours, patterns and environment:

Expect to work unusual hours as being a pilot is not a 9am to 5pm job. The length of a working day varies depending on the company and route, but can range from three to twelve hours. Start times will often differ depending on the route, sometimes beginning in the early morning and sometimes late at night.

Career path and progression:

You'll usually start with an airline as a first officer, where you'll be second-in-command on the aircraft. The captain has the overall responsibility for the flight and safety of the passengers and crew, but shares tasks with the first officer.

After you have gained enough experience and flying hours you can progress to the role of a senior first officer.

After gaining further substantial experience, senior first officers can apply for positions as a captain.

In order to gain a job as a captain, you need to complete an intensive training course. Promotion to captaincy might occur more quickly in a fast-growing budget airline than in a larger, more static organisation.