



PALOMAR

A V I A T I O N

Instrument Rating Requirements

To earn an **Instrument Rating** in the United States, which allows you to fly under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) in low-visibility conditions, you must meet specific requirements set by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Below is a concise breakdown of what's needed, assuming you already hold a Private Pilot License (PPL):

1. Eligibility Requirements

- **Pilot Certificate:** Hold at least a Private Pilot License (PPL) for the same aircraft category (e.g., airplane single-engine land).
- **Medical Certificate:** Maintain a valid FAA Third-Class Medical Certificate (or higher, if required for your pilot certificate).
- **Language:** Be able to read, speak, write, and understand English.

2. Flight Experience Requirements

- **Total Flight Time:** Log at least:
 - **50 hours of cross-country flight time** as pilot-in-command (PIC), with at least 10 hours in the aircraft category (e.g., airplanes) for which you seek the rating.
- **Instrument Time:** Log at least **40 hours of actual or simulated instrument time**, including:
 - **15 hours of instrument flight training** from a Certified Flight Instructor-Instrument (CFII) in the appropriate aircraft category.
 - Up to 20 hours of the 40 hours can be in an approved flight simulator or flight training device (FTD).
- **Cross-Country IFR Flight:** Complete one IFR cross-country flight of at least **250 nautical miles** along airways or ATC-directed routing, with:
 - An instrument approach at each airport.
 - At least three different kinds of approaches (e.g., ILS, VOR, GPS).
- **Recent Experience:** Within the 6 months preceding the practical test, have at least 6 hours of instrument time and 6 instrument approaches (actual or simulated).

3. Ground Training

- Complete ground training (formal ground school, self-study, or with a CFII) on:
 - IFR regulations and procedures
 - Instrument navigation
 - Weather interpretation
 - Instrument approach procedures
 - ATC communications
- Receive a CFII endorsement certifying you're prepared for the knowledge test.

4. Knowledge Test

- Pass the FAA Instrument Rating Knowledge Test (written exam) with a score of at least 70%. The test covers:
 - IFR flight planning
 - Instrument navigation
 - Weather analysis
 - Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) for IFR
 - Approach charts and procedures

5. Practical Test (Checkride)

- Pass the FAA Instrument Rating Practical Test with an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE), which includes:
 - **Oral Exam:** Demonstrate knowledge of IFR flight planning, instrument procedures, regulations, and charts.
 - **Flight Test:** Perform IFR operations, including:
 - Instrument approaches (precision and non-precision)
 - Holding patterns
 - Navigation using VOR, GPS, or ILS
 - Emergency procedures (e.g., partial panel)
 - Unusual attitude recovery
- You must provide an aircraft or simulator equipped for IFR flight.
- Receive a CFII endorsement certifying you're ready for the checkride.

6. Other Requirements

- **Logbook Endorsements:** Obtain endorsements from your CFII for both the knowledge test and practical test.
- **Application:** Submit an application via the FAA's Integrated Airman Certification and Rating Application (IACRA) system.

- **Valid ID:** Provide a government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license or passport).

Additional Notes

- **Costs:** An instrument rating typically costs \$15,000-\$25,000, depending on many factors.
- **Timeframe:** Most pilots take 3-6 months to complete depending on training frequency.
- **Simulator Use:** Using a simulator can reduce costs and allow training in controlled environments, especially for complex procedures.
- **Proficiency:** Regular practice is key, as IFR flying requires precision and currency (e.g., 6 approaches every 6 months to remain IFR current).

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, refer to FAA regulations (14 CFR Part 61) or visit www.faa.gov.