



CERTIFIED FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR (CFI)

You are cleared for takeoff on a new career!

Here's your "teach 'em to fly" roadmap—your guide to becoming an FAA Part 61 Certified Flight Instructor (CFI). Get ready to swap roles from student to teacher!

1. Meet the Prereqs

- **Age & Language:** You must be **18 years old** and able to **read, speak, write, and understand English**—so you can explain everything from “why we bank” to “when we yank.”
- **Certificates & Currency:** Hold at least a **Commercial Pilot Certificate** and an **Instrument Rating** (if you plan to teach instrument lessons). Keep your medical current (third class or higher) and your flight reviews up-to-date.
- **Flight Experience:** At minimum, you need **250 hours total flight time**, including night, cross-country, and instrument experience you've already built toward your commercial ticket.

2. Fundamentals of Instruction (FOI) Knowledge Test

- **What It Covers:** Learning theory, how people learn, lesson planning, teaching methods, and risk management in instruction.
- **The Exam:** 50 multiple-choice questions; you need **70%** to pass. Think psychology meets aerodynamics—no pop quizzes, just teaching smarts!

3. Flight Instructor Airplane (FIA) Knowledge Test

- **What It Covers:** Regulations for instructors, aircraft systems, aerodynamics, performance, emergencies, and teaching maneuvers.
- **The Exam:** Another 50 questions; again, **70%** to pass. It's like your commercial test on steroids—with an extra dash of “how would you teach this?”

4. Instructor Training Requirements

Under Part 61.183, you need:

- **Ground Instruction in FOI & FIA:** Your mentor-instructor will guide you through teaching techniques, lesson planning, and risk management—enough to endorse you for the FOI and FIA knowledge tests.
- **At Least 10 Hours of Flight Training:** Focused on teaching maneuvers, stall demonstrations, emergency procedures, ground-referenced maneuvers, and use of the airplane as a “flying chalkboard.”
- **Practical Test Prep:** Enough dual instruction to ensure you can conduct a lesson smoothly and safely.



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Pro Tip: Log your “meta-learning” (learning how to teach) just as carefully as your flight hours. Your future students will thank you!

5. Endorsements & Logbook Sign-Offs

Your instructor (or an FAA-authorized DPE) must endorse you for:

- **FOI Knowledge Test** eligibility
- **FIA Knowledge Test** eligibility
- **Practical Test** (“You’re ready to show the FAA you can teach!”)

Each signature is a green light to the next checkpoint.

6. The Checkride (Practical Test)

- **Oral Exam:** The examiner will grill you on teaching methods, risk management, lesson planning, FOI principles, and how you’d handle every imaginable “student oops.”
- **Flight Exam:** You’ll give an actual “mini-lesson” in the airplane—demonstrate maneuvers and then have the examiner act as your “student.” Show your ability to adapt to student mistakes and keep everyone safe.

7. After You Pass

- **Certificate Issued:** Congratulations—you’re now an FAA-certified CFI!
- **Build Currency:** Conduct at least one hour of instruction every 12 calendar months to keep that CFI certificate valid.
- **Keep Learning:** Attend seminars, read the latest FAA guidance, and maybe even add an instrument-instructor or multi-engine instructor rating down the road.

Quick Tips for Aspiring CFIs

- **Shadow a Great Teacher:** Fly with an experienced CFI before you train others—pick up best practices (and what to avoid!).
- **Practice Your Lessons:** Rehearse out loud—explaining a steep turn smoothly in your head doesn’t count until you say it to someone else.
- **Stay Patient & Positive:** Teaching is equal parts flying skill and people skill. A calm, encouraging tone goes a long way.
- **Join an Instructor Community:** Swap war stories, lesson-plan templates, and exam tips with fellow CFIs.

Ready to pass on the gift of flight? Your students are waiting—wheels up on your CFI journey!