

Professional Flight Concentration Certification Guide

Private, Instrument, and Commercial Pilot



Overview

To graduate from San Jose State in the Professional Flight Concentration and be eligible for the R-ATP* you must complete your:

Private Pilot Certificate (PPL)

Instrument Rating (IRA)

Commercial Pilot Certificate (CPL)

The cost of each certificate and rating is in addition to the tuition fees paid at San Jose State University and are paid directly to the flight school.

Each certificate and rating requires a significant level of personal given and dedication outside of “traditional” academic studies. As part of the Professional Flight program students are expected to have a flight lesson 3-4 times per week (in addition to their university studies). A breakdown of the time commitment for each flight lesson includes (on average):

- Individual Study Time/Homework (prior to flight): 1.5 - 2.0 hours
- Travel Time To and From SJSU to Reid-Hillview Airport: :30-:45 min each way by car. It will take long using public transportation.
- Pre-Flight: 30 min
- Flight: 1.5 hrs
- Post-Flight: 30 - :45 min
- **TOTAL PER LESSON: 5 hours**
- **MINIMUM COMMITMENT PER WEEK: 20 Hours**

These times represent a ‘typical’ flight some flights (i.e. cross-countries, etc.) will take longer.



Private Pilot Certificate (PPL)

Is the foundation for all pilot certifications. This allows individuals to fly a single-engine aircraft (ASEL) for personal purposes (not for compensation) under visual flight rules (VFR). Training includes both ground instruction and flight time (with and without an instructor) covering topics such as aircraft systems, Federal Aviation Regulations, navigation and Aeronautical Decision Making,

- **FAA Minimum Part 141 Flight Time:** 35 hours
- **Average Flight Time:** 65–75 hours
- **Typical Duration:** 5–8 Months

Cost Category	Hours	Rate/Hr	Total Cost**
Flight Time with CFI*	45	\$240	\$10,800
Flight Time - Solo	30	\$190	\$5,700
Ground Instruction with CFI	15	\$90	\$1,350
FAA Knowledge Test	—	—	\$200
Practical Test Fee - aka Checkride	—	—	\$1000
Supplies, Materials, Dues, Etc.	—	—	\$1000
Estimated Total	—	—	\$20,050

*Certified Flight Instructor



Instrument Rating (IRA)

Is the next step in becoming a professional pilot. It allows individuals to fly under instrument flight rules (IFR) relying solely on aircraft instruments. Training includes both ground instruction and flight time (with and without an instructor) covering topics such as basic attitude instrument flying, advanced Air Traffic Control procedures, advanced navigational procedures, and weather.

- **FAA Minimum Part 141 Flight Time:** 35 hours
- **Average Total Flight Time:** 50–55 hours
 - Can include 15 hours of simulator time
- **Typical Duration:** 4-6 Months

Cost Category	Hours	Rate/Hr	Total Cost**
Flight Time with CFI (aircraft)	35	\$250	\$8,750
Flight Time with CFI (simulator)	15	\$150	\$2,250
Ground Instruction with CFI	15	\$90	\$1,350
FAA Knowledge Test	—	—	\$200
Practical Test Fee - aka Checkride	—	—	\$1000
Supplies, Materials, Dues, Etc.	—	—	\$500
Estimated Total	—	—	\$14,050



Commercial Pilot Certificate (CPL)

This advanced ASEL certificate allows a pilot to be compensated for flying. It builds on the skills learned during the Private Pilot training teaching pilots more advanced maneuvers at a higher standard of precision, in a more complex aircraft. This certificate allows pilots to get jobs banner towing, flight instruction (with additional ratings), aerial photography, pipeline patrol and many others.

- **FAA Minimum Part 141 Flight Time:** 190 hours
- **Average Total Flight Time:** 240-250 hours
- **Typical Duration:** 3-12 months
 - Time to complete this certificate varies significantly depending on how much time a student has when they start their Commercial training and how quickly a student completes their time building requirements.

Cost Category	Hours	Rate/Hr	Total Cost**
Flight Time with CFI (Technically Advanced Aircraft [TAA] or Complex aircraft)	20	\$280	\$5,600
Time Building Flight Time - Solo	100	\$190	\$19,000
Ground Instruction with CFI	15	\$90	\$1,350
FAA Knowledge Test	—	—	\$200
Practical Test Fee - aka Checkride	—	—	\$1000
Supplies, Materials, Dues, Etc.	—	—	500
Estimated Total	—	—	\$27,650



Average Combined Cost Summary

These costs are averages based on the current price list at SJSU's affiliated schools and the average flight time it takes most SJSU students (which aligns with the average in California) to complete their certificate. Costs will vary but can be significantly reduced if the student flies regularly and does their individual studies - see below for factors affecting cost

- **FAA Minimum Part 141 Flight Time::** 190 hours
- **Average Flight Time:** 240-250 hours
- **Typical Duration:** 12-26 months
 - The SJSU Professional Roadmap is designed to have you complete your Commercial Pilot Certificate in the Fall Semester of your Junior year.

Certificate/Rating	Estimated Total Cost**
Private Pilot Certificate	\$20,050
Instrument Rating	\$14,050
Commercial Pilot Certificate	\$27,650
1st Class Medical	\$250
Estimated Combined Total	\$62,000

Additional Optional Costs	Estimate
IPad (GPS Equipped)	\$1,000
Headset	\$1,000
Kneeboard, logbook, flight computer, nav subscription etc.	\$1,000
Additional Optional Costs Estimate	\$3,000



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Factors That Affect Flight Time & Cost

While FAA regulations clearly define the minimum flight time required, the **actual number of hours it takes to earn a certificate can vary greatly** depending on individual student habits and training conditions. Here's what affects how quickly (and affordably) you progress:

- **Frequency of Flights**

- ***The single biggest factor affecting progress is how often you fly.***
- Students who **fly 3–4 times per week** retain skills better and typically finish **closer to the minimum hours**.
- Students who fly **once a week or less** tend to forget skills between lessons and often require **15–25% more flight hours**, which adds cost.
- California students are lucky to primary have mild to good weather year round but scheduling consideration does need to be given during the winter months for flights being canceled due to weather conditions depending on the phase of flight.

- **Ground Study, Preparation and Self Discipline**

- ***For every hour you spend in the air, you should spend at least one to two hours studying on the ground.***
- Good study habits require you:
 - Review maneuvers, procedures, and checklist flows before each flight.
 - Understand the "why" behind what you are learning
 - Come prepared to each lesson — this **reduces instructor briefing time** and maximizes your learning in the air.
- Students who consistently study independently tend to spend **fewer hours (and dollars)** paying an instructor to 'spoon' feed them information.

- **Use of Flight Simulators**

- FAA approved simulators or BATDs can **replace up to 15 hours** of instrument flight time.
- Simulators cost **less per hour** than aircraft and provide an ideal setting to learn complex radio procedures and IFR navigation in a 'slower' environment.

- ***SJSU students have access to SJSU simulators free of charge but must bring a CFII to log the flight time.***
 - ***Although it can't be logged simulator time is invaluable to the learning experience especially during Instrument training.***
 - **Consistency & Commitment**
 - Long gaps between flights cause regression in skills.
 - Interruptions or unnecessary cancelations can stretch timelines and increase costs.
 - Students who take their flight training seriously and **treat it like a part-time job** tend to stay on track.
 - **Instructor Matching & Training Environment & Equipment**
 - Building a good rapport with your instructor improves communication and progress.
 - Busy airspace (like in California) can delay training if not scheduled smartly.
 - Schedule conflicts due to poor aircraft availability and or instructor/student schedule compatibility will cause increase training time and costs.
 - Choosing to fly in more sophisticated airplanes although nice will increase costs.
 - **Want to Save Time & Money?**

Earning your pilot certificates is equivalent to holding at least a part-time job. The more prepared you are on the ground before each lesson the less time it will take you.

Fly often, study daily with your peers and individually, treat each lesson like the professional pilot you are striving to be, come prepared and ready to learn.
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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What happens after the Commercial Pilot Certificate

To be competitive for most paid flying jobs you will still need to log a significant amount of flight time. Additionally flying for an airline will require **at minimum** a R-ATP Certificate.

A typical path is to become a **Certified Flight Instructor (CFI)** to build hours while being paid to teach. Although not required the SJSU Professional Flight program is set-up for students to complete their CFI in the first semester of their Senior year allowing them to obtain a job prior to graduation.

Students will typically also obtain a Commercial Multi-Engine Land Certificate add-on to be competitive in the job market prior to reaching R-ATP minimums.

Q. What is a R-ATP Certificate

A Restricted Airline Transport Pilot Certificate(R-ATP) is required for pilots to serve as first officers for an airline with fewer than the full 1,500 hours required for an unrestricted Airline Transport Pilot Certificate (ATP).

To qualify you must:

- Graduate from SJSU having completed the Professional Pilot option
- Completed at minimum your Instrument Rating and Commercial Pilot Certificate under FAA Part 141 at one of SJSU's affiliated flight schools.
- Logged at least 1,250 hours of flight time.

Q. How much flight time is required for each certificate?

Each certificate has FAA minimums, but most students exceed them:

- Private Pilot (PPL): Minimum 35 hours training , average 65–75
- Instrument Rating (IRA): Minimum 35 hours training, average 50–55
- Commercial Pilot (CPL): Minimum 190 hours total, average 240–260

Q. What type of aircraft will I fly?

SJSU affiliated flight schools primarily fly Cessna 172s or Piper Archers with either traditional 6-pack instrumentation or glass cockpits. They also Technically Advanced Aircraft (TAA) and/or complex aircraft for Commercial training. Glass cockpit airplanes are more expensive adding additional costs to your flight training

Q. What is a traditional 6-pack?

Aircraft with the traditional six *analog* instruments (attitude indicator, vertical speed indicator, heading indicator, airspeed indicator, altimeter, turn coordinator).

Q. What is a glass cockpit?

Aircraft that use digital LCD or LED screens to provide required and advanced instrumentation on Primary Flight Displays(PFD's) and Multi-Function Displays (MFD's)

Q. What is a Technically Advanced Aircraft (TAA)?

Is an airplane equipped with advanced avionics, typically including a moving map GPS, an autopilot, and a Primary Flight Display (PFD).

Q. What is a complex aircraft?

The FAA defines a complex aircraft as having retractable landing gear, flaps, and a controllable-pitch (constant-speed) propeller.

Q. How many days per week should I fly?

Professional Flight program students are expected to have a **flight lesson 3-4 times per week** (in addition to their university studies. Flying less frequently leads to skill loss and longer training and increased costs

Q. Do I need to be a US Citizen to start flying?

No, you don't need to be a U.S. citizen to start flight training but non-US citizens do require additional Homeland Security clearance before they can begin flying. You must have valid visa or permanent resident status to be issued a pilot certificate.

Q. Do I need to pass a medical exam to start training?

Yes! SJSU students are expected to obtain a **First-Class FAA Medical Certificate** to ensure you can pass the rigorous medical screening required of Professional Pilots **before** invest a lot of money and learn you can't get a First-Class FAA Medical.*

*Note: You only need a Third-Class FAA Medical Certificate for the PPL and IRA and a Second-Class Medical for CPL however SJSU requires a **First-Class FAA Medical Certificate** for the benefit of the student.

Q. How to I get a FAA Medical Certificate?

1. Complete an online application providing extensive medical history
2. Schedule an appointment with an FAA-authorized Aviation Medical Examiner (AME).
3. At your exam, the AME will evaluate your vision, hearing, blood pressure, and overall health to determine if you meet the medical standards for a **First-Class FAA Medical Certificate**
4. If you pass, you'll receive your certificate on the spot or shortly afterward. Are there ground school classes, or is it all flying?

Q. What are the SJSU Part 141 Ground School Courses (AVIA 2, 62 and 112).

The Part 141 Ground school at SJSU will prepare you to take the FAA knowledge tests and support the material you will be learning during your flight training.

Q. What happens if I need to take a break during training?

You must notify both the flight school and SJSU's Chief Pilot's office. You can pause, but long gaps may result in lost skills and higher costs and delayed graduation. It's best to train consistently, even if part-time.

Q. Is there financial assistance available?

Yes, You may qualify for:

- **Private loans**
- **Veteran education benefits (GI Bill)**
- **Scholarships from SJSU**
- **Scholarships from aviation organizations -**
 - The Chief Pilot's Office at SJSU proactively identifies and promotes external aviation scholarship opportunities to all students. ***In addition, the office offers individualized support with application materials, including essay development and interview preparation, to enhance students' chances of success as part of students enrollment in the Professional Flight option.***

** The costs listed are averages across all four affiliated flight schools and are intended to provide a general estimate. Actual prices may vary based on the type of aircraft flown, the CFI's (Certified Flight Instructor's) rate, and most importantly, the student's level of commitment and consistency. Students who fly more frequently and dedicate time to independent study tend to progress more efficiently and cost-effectively.