

Airline Pilot

Airline pilots fly passengers and cargo to destinations around the world.

ANNUAL SALARY

£20,000 to £140,000

Average UK salary in 2018 was £29,588 (source Office for Statistics)

WORKING HOURS

Variable

5%

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

There will be 5% more Airline pilot jobs in 2023.
[In your local area](#)



What's it all about?

What you'll do

In this role you could be:

- carrying out pre-flight checks of instruments, engines, fuel and safety systems
- working out the best route using weather reports and information from air traffic control
- following instructions from air traffic control
- checking data during the flight and adjusting the route where necessary
- telling passengers and crew about journey progress
- writing reports about in-flight issues

On flights taking a short amount of time (short haul flights), you'll usually work in a two-person team, as pilot (captain) or co-pilot (first officer).

On long haul flights, you'll often have a flight engineer on board, to check the instruments.

You might also work in crop spraying, flight testing and flight training.

Entry requirements

You can get into this job through:

- a university course
- applying directly
- a trainee scheme
- specialist courses run by private training organisations

University

You could do a university degree in air transport or aviation, which includes commercial pilot training with an approved flight training organisation.

To start a course, you'll need:

- A levels or equivalent qualifications
- a minimum of a [Class 2 medical certificate](#)
- to be over 18

You'll need to apply for the higher level [Class 1 medical certificate](#) during your course to get your Commercial Pilot's Licence. If you wish, you can apply for the Class 1 certificate before your course starts.

University courses lead to a 'frozen' Air Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL). This allows you to apply to airlines to work as a co-pilot and build up the necessary flying hours to become an airline captain.

As well as standard university fees, you will need to fund the flight training part of your course. Universities can advise you about this.

You'll usually need:

- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), including English, maths and a science
- 2 to 3 A levels for a degree

Direct application

You may be able to apply directly to the Civil Aviation Authority's [Military Accreditation Scheme](#) to become a commercial pilot, if you have flying experience in the armed forces.

Other routes

You can apply for a place on a pilot training programme with a [passenger airline](#).

You can also train with a private flying school to get your Commercial Pilot's Licence. Courses can take at least 18 months of full-time study. Part-time or modular courses will take longer. The [Civil Aviation Authority](#) has details of flight training schools.

Career tips

[The Honourable Company of Air Pilots](#) has a test for people with little or no flying experience. Pilot training is expensive and this could help you decide whether you're suited to this career before you spend money on training.

Restrictions and requirements

You'll need to:

- be aged 21 or over

- hold a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) issued by the [Civil Aviation Authority](#) (CAA)
- pass the [Civil Aviation Authority medical](#) before you can take a course - the medical includes tests on your fitness, hearing and vision
- pass [enhanced background checks](#)

Employment by region

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Region	Jobs
South West	1,566
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,154
South East	2,793
North West	1,758
West Midlands	1,108
Scotland	1,669
East of England	1,502
London	10,529

Salary

£20,000 to £140,000

Starter salary: £20,000 to £30,000

Experienced salary: £38,000 to £90,000 (experienced co-pilot and captain)

You could get benefits like bonuses or health insurance.

These figures are a guide.

Working hours

Variable

Your working hours will depend on the flying time for each destination.

On UK and European flights, you'll usually be able to return home each day. Longer flights may mean that you'll need to spend a 1 or 2 nights away from home. Your employer will provide you with accommodation.

Working hours are strictly regulated for safety reasons.

You'll need to wear a uniform and carry identification at all times.

Career path and progression

You'll start by training as a co-pilot. When you've completed at least 1500 flying hours, you can apply for an 'unfrozen' or full Air Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) and qualify as an airline captain. This will usually take 3 to 5 years after you get your full ATPL.

With experience, you could become a flight training instructor or an operations manager.

Further information

You can find out more about training to become a pilot through [Flying Start](#) and the [British Airline Pilots' Association](#).