

Revision 5

Pilot Licences and Ratings - Aerobatic Flight Rating

05 April 2025

General

Civil Aviation Authority advisory circulars (ACs) contain information about standards, practices, and procedures that the Director has found to be an **Acceptable Means of Compliance** with the associated rule.

Consideration will be given to other methods of compliance that may be presented to the Director. When new standards, practices, or procedures are found to be acceptable they will be added to the appropriate AC.

Purpose

This AC describes an acceptable means of compliance with requirements for ground syllabus and flight syllabus content for meeting the Civil Aviation Rule requirements for the issue of an Aerobatic Flight Rating.

Related Rules

This AC relates specifically to Civil Aviation Rule Part 61 Subpart L – Aerobatic Flight Rating

Change Notice

Revision 5 makes minor stylistic and format changes, updates a link to the I'M SAFE poster, and corrects minor errors.

Version History

History Log

Revision No.	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
AC61-12, Rev 0	6 October 1998	Initial issue of this AC
AC61-12, Rev 1	10 May 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heading added for Appendix 2.• Removed references to the New Zealand Gliding Association and the words “for powered aeroplanes” at rule 61.551(a) and (b).• Reference to an exemption at rule 61.551(c) removed.
AC61-12, Rev 2	11 May 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Included amendments to the logbook entries for issue of a parachute drop rating, related to the reissue of Part 61.• Updated the layout of the AC.
AC61-12, Rev 3	9 May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-numbered from AC 61-1.12 to AC 61-12 as part of a project to standardise the numbering of all ACs.
AC61-12, Rev 4	21 April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corrected typographical and formatting errors.• Made stylistic changes to standardise the format so it is more like other ACs in this series, i.e. a series of numbered lists.• Added a Version History.
AC61-12, Rev 5	5 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes minor stylistic and format changes• Updates a link to the I’M SAFE poster• Corrects minor errors.

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Rule 61.551 Eligibility requirements

Ground course

Rule 61.551(a)(1) requires an applicant for an aerobatic flight rating to have satisfactorily completed an aerobatics ground course. The content of the ground course generally includes the material detailed in Appendix I of this AC.

Flight training course

Rule 61.551(a)(2) requires an applicant for an aerobatic flight rating to have satisfactorily completed an aerobatics flight training course. The content of this course will generally include the material detailed in Appendix II of this AC.

Rule 61.553 Issue

Logbook endorsement

Rule 61.553 states the requirements for the issue of an aerobatic flight rating. The flight instructor operating under the authority of the Part 141 certificate, or the authorised person operating under the authority of the Part 149 organisation, must be satisfied that the eligibility requirements of rule 61.551 have been met before issuing the aerobatic flight rating.

All relevant details must have been instructed, completed, and checked, either orally, in writing, or in practice, to the satisfaction of the certifying person. This process should include a thorough understanding by the candidate of the limitations of the conditions and the responsibilities of the approval. The certifying person must be satisfied that the candidate is both competent and safe. The essential element of aerobatics training is safety and that includes the attitude of the pilot.

The entry in the logbook must be made in accordance with rule 61.29(a)(3) including:

- i. the purpose of the flight
- ii. the date of the flight
- iii. the expiry date of the flight test, flight review, competency demonstration or check, and
- iv. the name, client number, and signature of the person conducting the flight test, flight review, competency demonstration, or check.

Additional reading material on aerobatics

Title	Author
Aerobatics	Neil Williams
Aerobatics, Principles and Practice	David Robson
All about Aerobatics	Ross Ewing
Aviation Medicine and Other Human Factors for Pilots	Ross Ewing
Basic Aerobatics	Campbell and Tempest
Basic Aerobatics	Mike Goulian
Flight Unlimited	Muller and Carson
Fly for Fun	Bill Thomas

Appendix I - Aerobatic Flight Rating Ground Syllabus

It is recommended that the ground course is integrated with the flight training.

Rules: 91.701 and 91.703

Airframe and aerodynamics:

- a) Weight: fuel, passengers, and parachute (as applicable).
- b) Centre of gravity (CoG).
- c) The accelerometer (G-meter).
- d) Operational envelope: effect of speed and weight, gravitational limitations, anticipated height loss/gain, rolling and pitching under load, overstress, and effect of turbulence.
- e) Angle of attack and drag.
- f) Dynamic stall.
- g) Airspeed: dive and recovery, escape manoeuvres, limitations, recommended entry speeds, relationship of IAS and control.
- h) High and low speed flight.
- i) Energy management.

Engine and mechanical limitations:

- a) Limits of engine revolutions per minute (RPM) and redline: temperatures and pressures.
- b) Propellers: forces, effect at high and slow speed, fixed pitch and constant speed.
- c) Fuel and oil system: controls and limitations.

Flight controls limitations and effects:

- a) Ailerons and elevator.
- b) Rudder.
- c) Throttle.
- d) Slipstream.
- e) Torque.

Human factors:

- a) Physiological limitations: "G" Force:
 - i. physiological effects (grey-out, black-out, G induced loss of consciousness, red out)
 - ii. how it is sensed
 - iii. emphasis on early recognition, and
 - iv. prevention of its effects, recovery, becoming adjusted through currency.
- b) Causes of nausea: pilot and passenger monitoring techniques.
- c) Visual illusion: at low level, in poor light, over water; depth of vision.

- d) Disorientation and loss of horizon.

Airmanship:**Prior to Flight:**

Pilot: Use the [I'M SAFE](#) procedure to assess:

- a) physical fitness
- b) currency of licence
- c) freedom from performance inhibitors (medication, alcohol, sleep deprivation, occupational and social stress)
- d) adrenaline, and
- e) peer pressure effects.

Aircraft: Check:

- a) pockets are empty
- b) aircraft is free of loose articles or articles that could come loose, and
- c) a mechanical inspection has been done (aerobatics is most intolerant of airworthiness faults).

Parachutes: Check:

- a) fitting, and
- b) use (as applicable).

In Flight:

- a) Environmental and neighbourly considerations.
- b) HASEL checks.
- c) Safety manoeuvres.
- d) Altitude awareness.
- e) Situational awareness.

Emergency procedures:

- a) Managing:
 - i. engine failure
 - ii. control failure
 - iii. fire
 - iv. loss of control of passenger
 - v. escape manoeuvres
 - vi. recovery from unusual attitudes, and
 - vii. height preservation.
- b) Vacating the aircraft in flight (as applicable).
- c) Energy management.

- d) Recognition of when to stop.

Post flight evaluation:

- a) Any activity outside limits of:
 - i. legislation
 - ii. airframe
 - iii. engine, and
 - iv. pilot.
- b) Medium term post flight effects of:
 - i. aerobatics
 - ii. disorientation, and
 - iii. G force.

Pilot maintenance:

- a) Abilities and restrictions in accordance with Part 43.

Appendix II - Aerobatic Flight Rating Flight Syllabus

General

The flight training course should provide an introduction to the basic aerobatic manoeuvres with an emphasis on their safe and accurate execution.

The flight training course should consist of dual instruction, solo practice and consolidation.

The flight training course should cover in practice all the elements of the ground course. Particular attention should be given to:

- a) engine management
- b) aerodynamic and loading effects of aerobatic flight on the aircraft
- c) disorientation effects on the pilot, and
- d) the elemental need for safety, particularly:
 - i. recovery from unusual attitudes
 - ii. the management of energy
 - iii. height above the ground, and
 - iv. situational awareness.

The course ought to be flexible enough to cater for aircraft of different performance and capabilities. It should include:

- a) Advanced turns (more than 60-degrees of bank angle)
- b) Spinning
- c) Loops
- d) Rolls
- e) Stall turns
- f) Combinations, such as:
 - i. half cubans
 - ii. half reverse cubans, and
 - iii. rolls off the top.
- g) Emergencies and recovery from unusual attitudes.

It may include:

- a) Snap rolls or other manoeuvres at the discretion of the instructor, dependent on:
 - i. pilot aptitude, and
 - ii. aircraft integrity.

Minimum Flight Instructor Requirements:**Greater than 3000ft above the surface:**

A current Category A Flight Instructor may carry out aerobatic flight instruction training for an Aerobatic Flight Rating provided the flight instructor:

- a) is rated on the aircraft being used for flight instruction, and
- b) is operating under a Part 141 organisation authorised to conduct and issue an Aerobatic Flight Rating.

A current Category B or Category C Flight Instructor may carry out aerobatic flight instruction training for an Aerobatic Flight Rating provided the flight instructor:

- a) is rated on the aircraft being used for flight instruction
- b) holds flight instructor aerobatic privilege
- c) has a logbook certification by an appropriately authorised Flight Examiner to instruct in spinning and aerobatics, and
- d) is operating under a Part 141 organisation authorised to conduct and issue the Aerobatic Flight Rating, or
- e) is a person authorised by and operating under the authority of a Part 149 organisation authorised to conduct and issue an Aerobatic Flight Rating.

At or below 3000ft and greater than 1500ft above the surface:

In addition to the requirements above, the Flight Instructor who is operating under a Part 141 organisation, or the person authorised by the Part 149 organisation, prior to carrying out aerobatic flight instruction at this altitude is to have 50 hours of aerobatic flight instructor experience.

At or below 1500ft above the surface:

In addition to the requirements above, the Flight Instructor who is operating under a Part 141 organisation, or the person authorised by the Part 149 organisation, prior to carrying out aerobatic flight instruction at this altitude is to have 100 hours of aerobatic flight instructor experience.

Persons seeking more information on the aerobatic rating should contact an aerobatic organisation certificated under Part 141 or Part 149.