



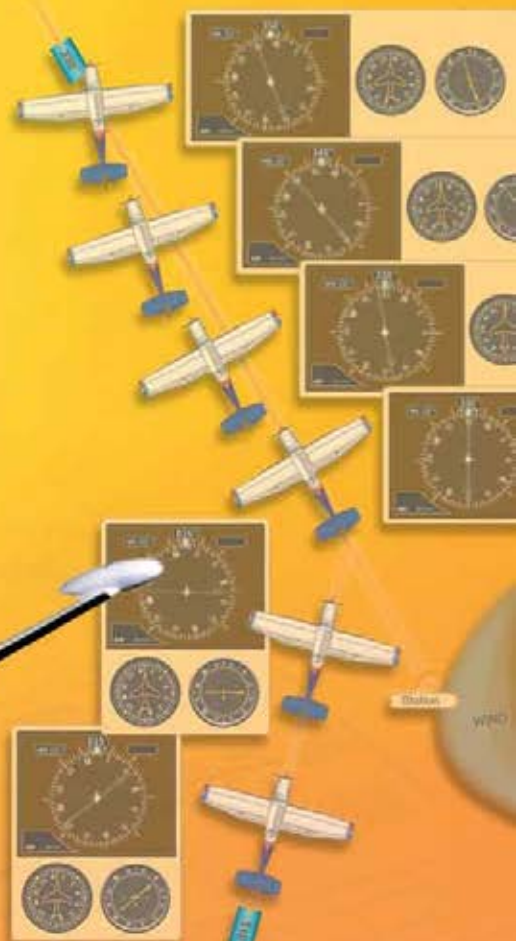
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Instrument Flying Handbook



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**FEDERAL AVIATION
ADMINISTRATION**



Instrument Flying Handbook
2012
FAA-H-8083-15B

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Airspace Classification

Airspace in the United States [Figure 1-1] is designated as follows:

1. Class A. Generally, airspace from 18,000 feet mean sea level (MSL) up to and including flight level (FL) 600, including the airspace overlying the waters within 12 nautical miles (NM) of the coast of the 48 contiguous states and Alaska. Unless otherwise authorized, all pilots must operate their aircraft under instrument flight rules (IFR).
2. Class B. Generally, airspace from the surface to 10,000 feet MSL surrounding the nation's busiest airports in terms of airport operations or passenger enplanements. The configuration of each Class B airspace area is individually tailored, consists of a surface area and two or more layers (some Class B airspace areas resemble upside-down wedding cakes), and is designed to contain all published instrument procedures once an aircraft enters the airspace. An air traffic control (ATC) clearance is required for all aircraft to operate in the area, and all aircraft that are so cleared receive separation services within the airspace.
3. Class C. Generally, airspace from the surface to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation (charted in MSL) surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower are serviced by a radar approach control and have a certain number of IFR operations or passenger enplanements. Although the configuration of each Class C area is individually tailored, the airspace usually consists of a surface area with a 5 NM radius, an outer circle with a 10 NM radius that extends from 1,200 feet to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation and an outer area. Each aircraft must establish two-way radio communications with the ATC facility providing air traffic services prior to entering the airspace and thereafter maintain those communications while within the airspace.
4. Class D. Generally, airspace from the surface to 2,500 feet above the airport elevation (charted in MSL) surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower. The configuration of each Class D airspace area is individually tailored and, when instrument procedures are published, the airspace normally designed to contain the procedures. Arrival extensions for instrument approach procedures (IAPs) may be Class D or Class E airspace. Unless otherwise authorized, each aircraft must establish two-way radio communications with the ATC facility providing air traffic services prior to entering the airspace and thereafter maintain those communications while in the airspace.
5. Class E. Generally, if the airspace is not Class A, B, C, or D, and is controlled airspace, then it is Class E airspace. Class E airspace extends upward from either the surface or a designated altitude to the overlying or adjacent controlled airspace. When designated as a surface area, the airspace is configured to contain all instrument procedures. Also in this class are federal airways, airspace beginning at either 700 or 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) used to transition to and from the terminal or en route environment, and en route domestic and offshore airspace areas designated below 18,000 feet MSL. Unless designated at a lower altitude, Class E airspace begins at 14,500 MSL over the United States, including that airspace overlying the waters within 12 NM of the coast of the 48 contiguous states and Alaska, up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL, and the airspace above FL 600.
6. Class G. Airspace not designated as Class A, B, C, D, or E. Class G airspace is essentially uncontrolled by ATC except when associated with a temporary control tower.

Special Use Airspace

Special use airspace is the designation for airspace in which certain activities must be confined or where limitations may be imposed on aircraft operations that are not part of those activities. Certain special use airspace areas can create limitations on the mixed use of airspace. The special use airspace depicted on instrument charts includes the area name or number, effective altitude, time and weather conditions of operation, the controlling agency, and the chart panel location. On National Aeronautical Navigation Products (AeroNav Products) en route charts, this information is available on one of the end panels.

Prohibited areas contain airspace of defined dimensions within which the flight of aircraft is prohibited. Such areas are established for security or other reasons associated with the national welfare. These areas are published in the Federal Register and are depicted on aeronautical charts. The area is charted as a "P" followed by a number (e.g., "P-123").

Restricted areas are areas where operations are hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft and contain airspace within which the flight of aircraft, while not wholly prohibited, is subject to restrictions. Activities within these areas must be confined because of their nature, or limitations may be imposed upon aircraft operations that are not a part of those activities, or both. Restricted areas denote the existence of unusual, often invisible, hazards to aircraft (e.g., artillery firing, aerial gunnery, or guided missiles). IFR flights may be authorized to transit the airspace and are routed accordingly. Penetration

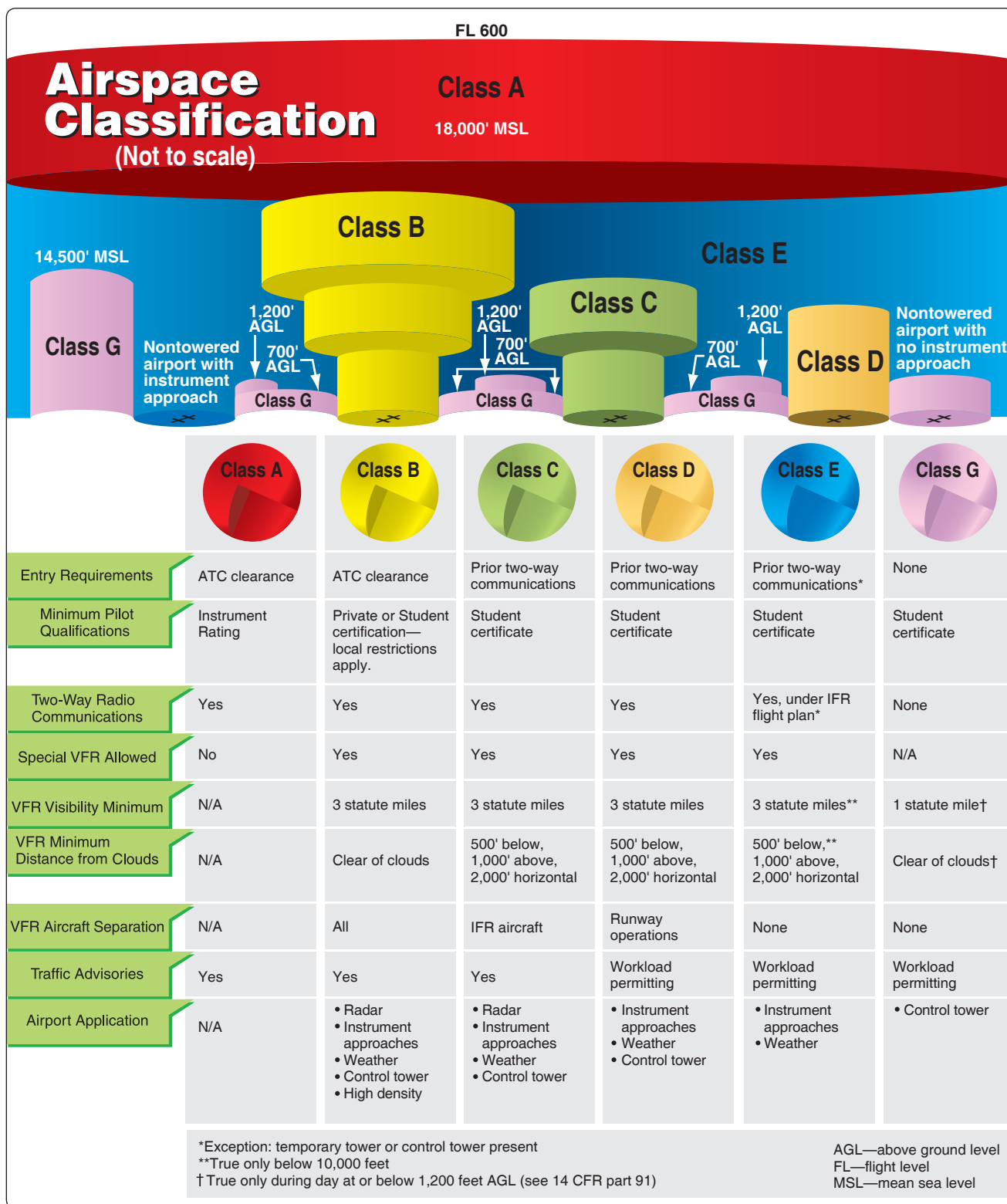


Figure 1-1. Airspace classifications.

of restricted areas without authorization from the using or controlling agency may be extremely hazardous to the aircraft and its occupants. ATC facilities apply the following procedures when aircraft are operating on an IFR clearance (including those cleared by ATC to maintain visual flight rules (VFR)-On-Top) via a route that lies within joint-use restricted airspace:

1. If the restricted area is not active and has been released to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the ATC facility will allow the aircraft to operate in the restricted airspace without issuing specific clearance for it to do so.
2. If the restricted area is active and has not been released to the FAA, the ATC facility will issue a clearance that will ensure the aircraft avoids the restricted airspace.

Restricted areas are charted with an “R” followed by a number (e.g., “R-5701”) and are depicted on the en route chart appropriate for use at the altitude or FL being flown.

Warning areas are similar in nature to restricted areas; however, the U.S. Government does not have sole jurisdiction over the airspace. A warning area is airspace of defined dimensions, extending from 12 NM outward from the coast of the United States, containing activity that may be hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft. The purpose of such areas is to warn nonparticipating pilots of the potential danger. A warning area may be located over domestic or international waters or both. The airspace is designated with a “W” followed by a number (e.g., “W-123”).

Military operations areas (MOAs) consist of airspace with defined vertical and lateral limits established for the purpose of separating certain military training activities from IFR traffic. Whenever an MOA is being used, nonparticipating IFR traffic may be cleared through an MOA if IFR separation can be provided by ATC. Otherwise, ATC will reroute or restrict nonparticipating IFR traffic. MOAs are depicted on sectional, VFR terminal area, and en route low altitude charts and are not numbered (e.g., “Boardman MOA”).

Alert areas are depicted on aeronautical charts with an “A” followed by a number (e.g., “A-123”) to inform nonparticipating pilots of areas that may contain a high volume of pilot training or an unusual type of aerial activity. Pilots should exercise caution in alert areas. All activity within an alert area shall be conducted in accordance with regulations, without waiver, and pilots of participating aircraft, as well as pilots transiting the area, shall be equally responsible for collision avoidance.

Military Training Routes (MTRs) are routes used by military aircraft to maintain proficiency in tactical flying. These routes are usually established below 10,000 feet MSL for operations at speeds in excess of 250 knots. Some route segments may be defined at higher altitudes for purposes of route continuity. Routes are identified as IFR (IR) and VFR (VR) followed by a number. MTRs with no segment above 1,500 feet AGL are identified by four number characters (e.g., IR1206, VR1207). MTRs that include one or more segments above 1,500 feet AGL are identified by three number characters (e.g., IR206, VR207). IFR low altitude en route charts depict all IR routes and all VR routes that accommodate operations above 1,500 feet AGL. IR routes are conducted in accordance with IFR regardless of weather conditions.

Temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) are put into effect when traffic in the airspace would endanger or hamper air or ground activities in the designated area. For example, a forest fire, chemical accident, flood, or disaster-relief effort could warrant a TFR, which would be issued as a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM).

National Security Areas (NSAs) consist of airspace with defined vertical and lateral dimensions established at locations where there is a requirement for increased security and safety of ground facilities. Flight in NSAs may be temporarily prohibited by regulation under the provisions of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 99 and prohibitions will be disseminated via NOTAM.

Federal Airways

The primary means for routing aircraft operating under IFR is the Federal Airways System. Each Federal airway is based on a centerline that extends from one navigational aid (NAVAID)/waypoint/fix/intersection to another NAVAID/waypoint/fix/intersection specified for that airway. A Federal airway includes the airspace within parallel boundary lines 4 NM to each side of the centerline. As in all instrument flight, courses are magnetic, and distances are in NM. The airspace of a Federal airway has a floor of 1,200 feet AGL, unless otherwise specified. A Federal airway does not include the airspace of a prohibited area.

Victor airways include the airspace extending from 1,200 feet AGL up to, but not including 18,000 feet MSL. The airways are designated on sectional and IFR low altitude en route charts with the letter “V” followed by a number (e.g., “V23”). Typically, Victor airways are given odd numbers when oriented north/south and even numbers when oriented east/west. If more than one airway coincides on a route segment, the numbers are listed serially (e.g., “V287-495-500”). [Figure 1-2]