

Becoming a pilot in Europe has a very “systems” feel to it. You are not just learning to fly, you are learning to operate inside a regulated framework that connects training, licensing, testing, and the exact topics you must demonstrate knowledge in. The big picture is governed by EASA rules under Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011, commonly referred to through Part-FCL. That framework is the spine behind the steps you’ll take, even though the exact path can still vary by country, by the school you choose, and by whether you end up training through an integrated route or a modular route.

In practical terms, the road toward becoming a commercial pilot (and the kind of privileges most people mean when they say “pilot license”) is usually shaped around one core goal: earning a CPL, a Commercial Pilot Licence. From there, the next question becomes what you are allowed to do with that licence, and what additional requirements you must meet for specific kinds of operations. Navigation and communications sit right in the middle of that reality, because they are not “side subjects” you can study lightly. Under EASA’s CPL theoretical knowledge exams, communications is explicitly one of the required knowledge areas, and navigation, radio navigation, and meteorology all show up as well. The licence is not awarded for vibes or flight hours alone. It is awarded because you can meet defined competence checks.

Below is a grounded way to think about the process, with a focus on the parts that tend to make or break people: understanding how the rules work, building a training plan that matches the test, and taking navigation and communications seriously from day one.

Start with the framework, not the romance

European pilot licensing is governed by EASA rules under Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011 (Part-FCL). EASA is the EU agency responsible for aviation safety rules in Europe. That matters because it means your training does not float free. Even if a flight school gives you a schedule that feels unique, it should still line up with the Part-FCL expectations for what you must learn and what you must be assessed on.

One reason this helps is that it keeps you from chasing a plan that looks good on paper but does not match the actual skill test requirements. EASA’s published CPL requirements include the requirement that CPL applicants receive instruction on the same class or type of aircraft used for the skill test, and that the applicant must have fulfilled requirements for the class or type rating of the aircraft used in the skill test. When people skip or underinvest in the “matching” part, the consequences can show up later, at a time when you are already exhausted from trying to cram everything else.

[flight school](#)

So the first step is learning how your training is supposed to connect to your test. Not in a vague way, in a concrete way: the aircraft class or type that you will be tested on, and the instruction that you will receive for that same class or type.

Decide what licence you are really aiming for

The phrase “become a pilot” can mean different things depending on what privilege you want. EASA’s licensing structure is not just about learning to fly, it is also about what you are allowed to do once you pass.

For example, the CPL is tied to commercial privileges, but EASA’s rules also spell out how a CPL holder may act in operations other than commercial air transport, and how they may act in commercial air transport depending on restrictions such as whether you are in single-pilot aircraft or acting as co-pilot. The key point for your planning is

that the licence is a gateway, but it is not the whole story. Your intended operating context influences which restrictions apply and what you will need after the licence.

There is also a straightforward eligibility constraint that shapes timelines: to get a CPL (for aeroplanes), the applicant must be at least 18 years old. That requirement can sound simple, but it affects everything. It can change your best training window, your exam timing, and how you pace certain tasks so you do not end up sitting on completed study while waiting for a date you cannot legally use.

Map the journey around assessments

EASA's CPL pathway includes two major pillars: theoretical knowledge exams and a skill test. The theory side is not a grab bag. EASA lists the knowledge areas that CPL applicants must pass theoretical exams covering air law, aircraft general knowledge, instrumentation, mass and balance, performance, flight planning and monitoring, human performance, meteorology, navigation, radio navigation, operational procedures, principles of flight, and communications.

That list is important for two reasons.

First, it tells you what you are actually expected to understand. Navigation and radio navigation are explicit, as is communications. If you have ever felt that "I can fly it, I'll figure it out later," this is the moment to be honest with yourself. The theory exams do not care whether you personally like the subject. They care that you can demonstrate knowledge across those areas.

Second, it gives you a way to build a study plan that is aligned with assessment structure. When you know the subject categories required for the exams, you can design a rhythm that repeatedly returns to the core themes instead of treating each topic like an isolated chore.

The age-old trap: treating navigation and communications like optional extras

Navigation and communications are not separate from everything else. Under EASA's CPL theoretical knowledge exam categories, they are part of a required set that also includes air law, operational procedures, flight planning and monitoring, meteorology, and mass and balance. That means navigation is not just about plotting a route. It is about how navigation decisions connect to operational procedures and monitoring. Communications is not just about saying the right words. It sits inside air law and operational procedures and also overlaps with how you manage flight planning and monitoring.

What I often see with trainees is that they try to learn these areas in isolation. They practice "the script" for communications, or they memorize navigation concepts, but they do it without tying them back to the bigger operational picture.

You do not need to overcomplicate it. You just need to keep linking the dots as you study. When you learn navigation concepts, tie them to why flight planning and monitoring are required. When you practice communications, tie them to operational procedures and air law. When you touch meteorology, tie it back to how it affects the decisions you make during navigation and throughout flight monitoring.

Training has to match the skill test aircraft

EASA's requirements include a clear instruction on matching training and skill testing context. CPL applicants must have fulfilled requirements for the class or type rating of the aircraft used in the skill test, and applicants

must receive instruction on the same class or type of aircraft used for the skill test.

This is one of those details that can quietly determine your success. If your training is not aligned with the aircraft you will be assessed on, you can end up learning two overlapping but not identical systems. You might be flying well enough in one context, then discover that your proficiency is not transferable the way you assumed.

In the real world, this is where careful conversations matter. Before you commit to a plan, you want clarity on what class or type of aircraft the skill test will use, and how your instruction is structured to match it. A good school will be able to walk you through that logic without treating it like a bureaucratic detail. It <https://www.youtube.com/@AELOSwissAcademy/videos> is not bureaucratic. It is practical.

A realistic way to think about the steps

There are many ways a person can reach a CPL in Europe. EASA's Part-FCL rules are the basis for "how to become a pilot in Europe," but the exact training path can differ by country, school, and whether the trainee follows an integrated or modular route.

Since the verified facts here focus on the regulatory requirements and exam content rather than a specific country's calendar, the most honest approach is to describe steps in a way that stays faithful to what the rules require.

Here is a practical sequence that fits the EASA framework without pretending every country runs the same way.

1. Confirm your eligibility timeline, including the minimum age requirement of 18 for a CPL for aeroplanes.
2. Choose training that is designed to connect to the CPL theoretical knowledge exams, which cover the required knowledge areas including navigation and communications.
3. Align your training aircraft context with the class or type used for your skill test, since EASA requires instruction on the same class or type used for that skill test.
4. Pass the theoretical knowledge exams across the listed knowledge areas, including air law, operational procedures, navigation, radio navigation, and communications.
5. Complete the skill test requirements for the relevant class or type rating used in that skill test.

That sequence is intentionally "rule-aware." It is also flexible enough to accommodate different schools and different training route styles.

Study navigation like it has to survive real operations

If your goal is to become a pilot, navigation has to be studied as a competence, not a subject. In the CPL exam structure, navigation and radio navigation are separate knowledge areas, which is a hint that you should treat them as distinct capabilities.

Navigation, in the broader sense that shows up in exam categories, connects to flight planning and monitoring. Radio navigation connects to how you use navigation aids and how those tools support operational decision-making. When you study both, keep a simple question running in the background: "How does this information help me monitor the flight plan and adjust when reality refuses to cooperate?"

The biggest improvement I have seen in trainees is when they stop treating the navigation portion as an exercise of memorization. Instead, they practice turning information into decisions. Even when you are studying alone, you can simulate decision pressure by forcing yourself to articulate the "if this, then that" logic behind routing

and monitoring. You are not inventing new requirements for yourself, you are matching the exam categories to the mental habits you will need.

Communications: clarity, discipline, and compliance

Communications is often treated like a language course, but under the CPL exam categories it sits next to operational procedures and air law. That is a signal that communications is not just about fluency, it is about procedure and correctness.

When you work on communications for CPL-level expectations, prioritize three habits.

First, build discipline around standard phrase structure and timing. If you get lazy about when you transmit or you improvise too much, you can build bad reflexes that feel efficient in the moment but fail under stress.

Second, connect communications to operational procedures and monitoring. If you are making navigation changes or responding to meteorology-driven constraints, communications is how those changes are operationally “real” to everyone else. Under the structure of the knowledge areas, communications belongs to that operational loop.

Third, practice consistency. Your goal is not to sound different every day. Your goal is to communicate reliably, so that your crew coordination and your compliance behavior are steady.

There is a personal angle here too. I remember a trainee who was genuinely bright, but their communications were inconsistent. They could answer questions correctly in a quiet room, but when the workload rose, their transmissions started to drift. The fix was not more facts, it was repetition of the correct procedural habits until the “right” behavior arrived automatically under pressure. The exams test knowledge categories, but the licence ultimately measures competence in the real operational environment.

How to avoid the “theory-only success” illusion

Passing theoretical exams is a major milestone. Under EASA requirements, you must pass theoretical knowledge exams covering the listed areas. But it is also possible to become too comfortable because theory feels crisp, like right answers and clean categories.

The trap is assuming that good theory equals good performance. EASA’s framework includes a skill test and requires class or type rating alignment with the aircraft used. That means you cannot ignore the operational side.

So as you study, keep one foot in reality. If you learn concepts in mass and balance, performance, and principles of flight, treat them like tools that affect what you do during planning and monitoring. When you learn meteorology, treat it like the reason you may change your plan, not a trivia topic. When you learn navigation and radio navigation, treat them like the means by which your flight plan stays alive instead of turning into a document you used once.

What a CPL lets you do, and why that should influence your motivation

Once you have a CPL, EASA rules state that a CPL holder may act as pilot in command or co-pilot in operations other than commercial air transport. They may also act as pilot in commercial air transport in a single-pilot aircraft or as co-pilot in commercial air transport, subject to relevant restrictions.

That is not legal theory for the sake of legal theory. It affects how you think about “why” you are building these skills.



If you imagine your life as a pilot for a decade, you will care about more than what gets you through the exam. You will care about what kind of operational decisions you will be trusted to make, and how your training and experience will support that trust.

Navigation and communications are core to those trust decisions. You cannot do them well occasionally, they are daily disciplines. You cannot treat communications as something you only practice in the classroom, because operational procedures and monitoring demand that it is reliable under changing conditions.

[flight school](#)

Trade-offs you will feel while choosing a training route

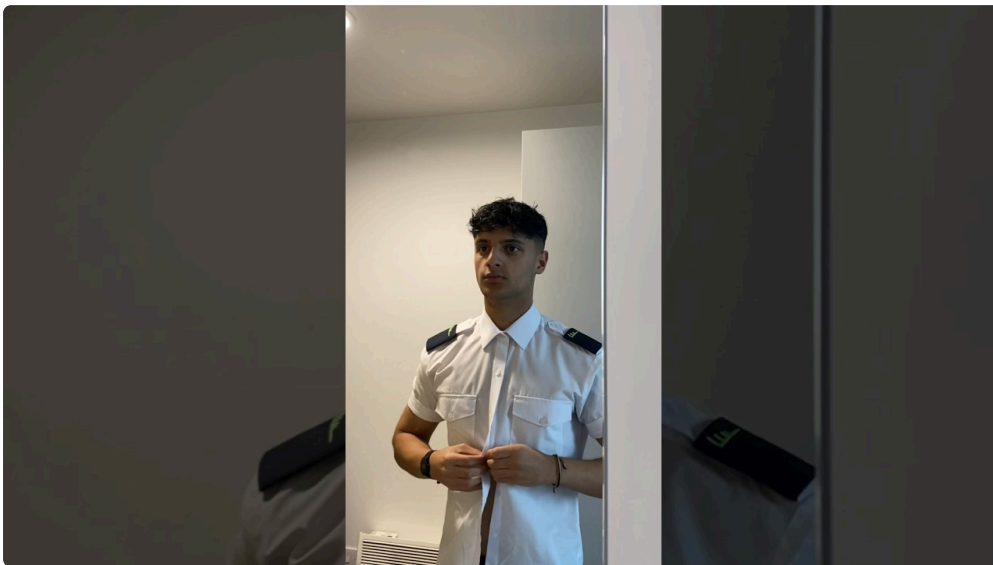
EASA notes that the exact training path can differ by country, school, and whether you follow an integrated or modular route. That means you will likely face trade-offs, even if the licensing end goal is the same.

With integrated training, the schedule can be more continuous, which often helps people stay in rhythm. With modular training, you might progress in smaller chunks, which can suit some lifestyles and learning preferences. But in both cases, what matters most is not the label, it is the alignment with EASA requirements: theoretical topics, skill test aircraft class or type, and the requirement that you receive instruction on the same class or type used for the skill test.

If you are the kind of learner who gets overwhelmed when multiple subjects pile up at once, modular may feel kinder, but it can also tempt you to defer connections between theory categories. Your job is to keep connecting categories in your mind, because EASA's exam list is broad for a reason. The licence expects a coherent competence, not isolated knowledge.



If you learn quickly with feedback, integrated may keep you moving through instruction and assessment without long gaps. The risk is that you might keep going even when certain areas are still shaky, because the pace makes it easy to “progress” without truly consolidating. Your job is to measure consolidation, not motion.



A short self-audit before you commit

When you are comparing schools or training plans, it helps to ask questions that map directly to EASA’s CPL framework. You are trying to verify that the plan will produce what the licence requirements ask for, especially around navigation, radio navigation, communications, and the aircraft used in skill testing.

- What class or type will be used for my skill test, and how will my instruction match that exactly?
- How does the training plan prepare me for the required theoretical knowledge areas, including navigation, radio navigation, and communications?
- How is flight planning and monitoring taught in a way that supports the theoretical exam categories?
- Where does operational procedures and air law show up in day-to-day training, not just in a textbook?
- What is the school’s approach to ensuring I fulfill the class or type rating requirements tied to the skill test aircraft?

Those questions are not “extra.” They are the practical equivalent of checking that your roadmap and your assessment targets are the same thing.

The day-to-day mindset that keeps you steady

Navigation and communications reward patience. They are not simply learned, they are practiced until they feel normal. The steadier you are, the less you rely on memory. The more you rely on procedure and competence, the more your decisions become calm and consistent.

For me, the turning point usually comes when a student stops asking, "Will I pass?" and starts asking, "Can I perform reliably when workload rises?" EASA's CPL structure pushes you in that direction, because the theoretical exams require broad competence, and the skill test is tied to a specific class or type used for assessment.

If you build habits that respect that structure from early on, you end up with something more useful than a pile of notes. You end up with a system for learning: theory connected to operational procedures, navigation connected to planning and monitoring, communications connected to air law and compliance.

That is what makes the process feel less like a hurdle and more like a professional development path.

Keep your focus on what is explicitly required

The common mistake when people talk about "becoming a pilot" is to talk in generalities. EASA's CPL requirements give you specificity. CPL theoretical exams cover a defined set of knowledge areas, including navigation, radio navigation, and communications. Instruction and skill test context are tied to the same aircraft class or type, and skill test aircraft matters because you must fulfill class or type rating requirements for it. And the minimum age for a CPL for aeroplanes is 18.

If you keep those anchors in view, the rest becomes easier to manage. Your training plan can be flexible, your school choice can be personal, your country and timing can differ, but you are always building toward the same competence framework.

That is the real comfort in the EASA rules. They give structure to a dream, so navigation and communications stop being intimidating and start being achievable, one careful decision at a time.