



AIRLINE PILOT CAREER GUIDE

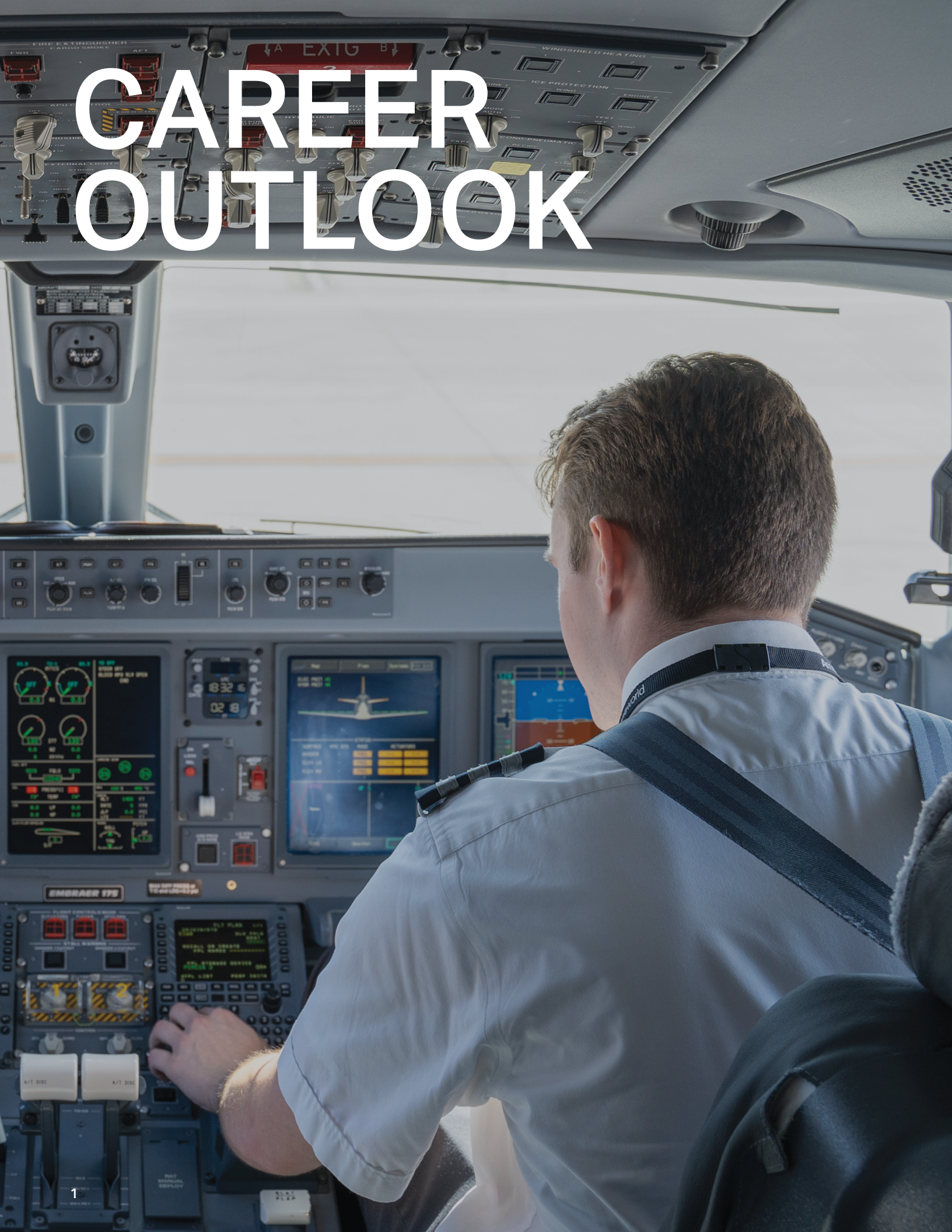
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CAREER OUTLOOK





Airline Pilot Hiring Outlook

Now is the time to become an airline pilot. Pilots training today face a bright career outlook with several key factors driving demand for qualified pilots.

In its [2022-2042 Aerospace Forecast](#), the FAA cites the airline pilot shortage as an ongoing issue, and one that is likely to persist. Data from [Oliver Wyman](#) suggests there is a current shortage of 8,000 pilots, increasing to nearly 30,000 by 2032. This shortage is driven by two major contributing factors:

- Airline pilot retirements versus pilots training to replace them
- Increasing demand for air travel with record numbers of passengers

Early retirements taken during the coronavirus pandemic deepened the shortage and accelerated demand for new pilots to enter the industry. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), 14,500 pilots will be needed each year through 2030.

Retirements Driving Demand for New Pilots

Airline pilots are required to retire at age 65, and an aging workforce approaching this mandatory retirement is creating a shortage of airline pilots. United Airlines [estimates](#) that half of their 12,500 pilots will retire over the next ten years, and they will need to hire 10,000 pilots over that period to keep pace with the growth. American Airlines has [similar predictions](#).

80,000 Airline Pilots Are Retiring

Future annual pilot retirements will average 4,100 new pilots per year and be greatest through 2030.

North America Will Need 128,000 Pilots

According to [Boeing](#), "competition for qualified pilots will remain strong over the next few years," with 128,000 new pilots needed in North America.

Industry Growth

Passenger demand is currently exceeding long-term averages due to economic growth, causing airlines to increase hiring numbers. Boeing, Airbus, and Embraer, all leading aircraft manufacturers, project increasing (even doubling) their commercial jet fleets to account for increase in consumer demand for air travel.

Boeing Forecast



602,000 NEW PILOTS NEEDED
WORLDWIDE OVER THE NEXT
20 YEARS

Airbus Forecast



AIRLINE TRAFFIC FORECAST TO
DOUBLE IN SIZE IN THE NEXT
20 YEARS

Embraer Forecast



3.2% AVERAGE ANNUAL
INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR AIR
TRANSPORT THROUGH 2041

According to the [2022 Pilot and Technician Outlook](#), "aspiring pilots who begin flight training today will be positioned to seize emerging opportunities by the time they graduate."



AIRLINE PAY & SENIORITY





Airline Pilot Pay

Flying is a satisfying and rewarding career, and commercial pilots are paid very well.

According to [the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#), the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the “median annual wage for airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers was \$202,180 in May 2021”. In addition to annual earnings, pilots take part in company health, life and disability insurance, as well as retirement plans. Pay for airline pilots depends on the airline, the airline type (regional or major), the pilot's experience level (pilot seniority), and the aircraft being flown.

Regional Airlines



Regional airlines typically fly under the banner of a major airline but are not actually part of that airline; an example of this is CommuteAir operating under the name “United Express®.” These airlines usually fly jets ranging from 50 to 75 passengers and are where most civilian pilots get their first airline job. Pay at the regional airlines is typically less than at the major airlines, with salaries ranging from \$57,000 to \$131,500 a year. The pilot shortage is causing many regional airlines to rapidly increase pay, such as [American Airlines' regionals Envoy and PSA](#), who increased pay by 50%.

Major Airlines



Major airlines consist of well-known names, such as American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines®, Frontier, and Spirit. Pilots work many years to get hired by a major airline and rarely leave one to work at another. Pilots at the major airlines enjoy substantial salaries and good benefits. Salary at major airlines ranges from \$90,000 to \$400,000 a year.

ATP has Direct Programs with Frontier, Spirit, and more, so graduates can go straight to a First Officer position with a major airline after reaching airline pilot hiring minimums.

Potential Earnings at a Major Airline

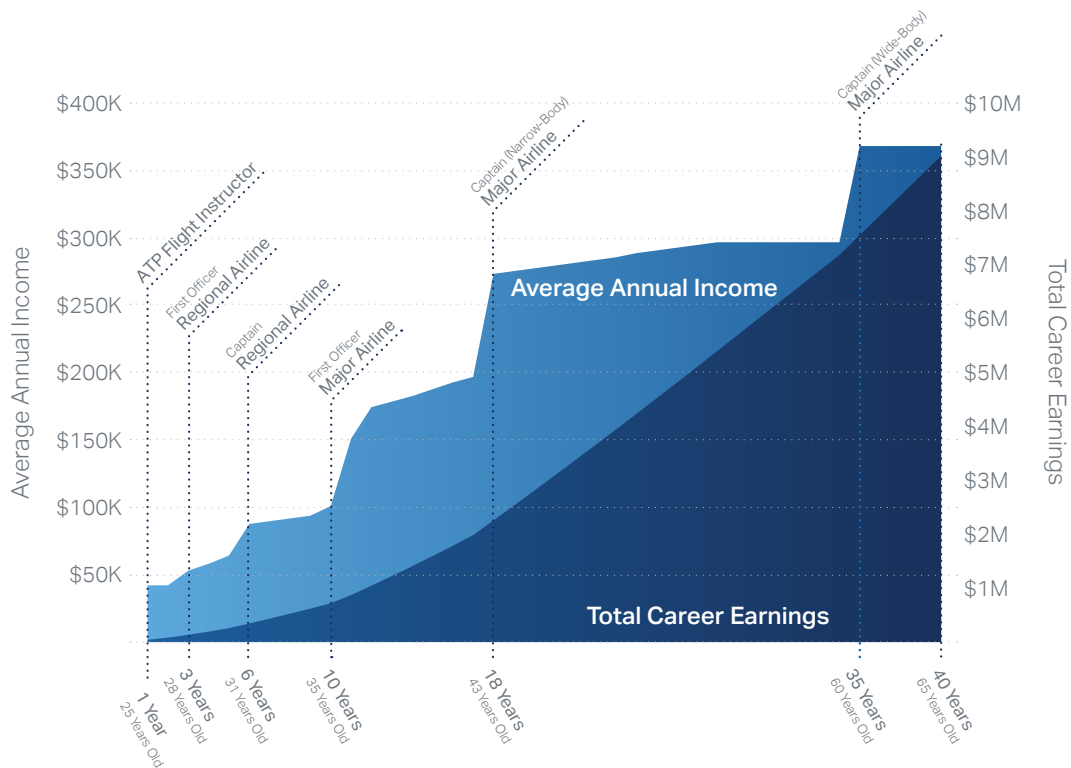
	First Officer ¹	Captain (Narrow-Body) ¹	Captain (Wide-Body) ^{2*}
Year 1	\$100,840	\$273,220	\$338,500
Year 6	\$187,540	\$283,420	\$351,760
Year 12	\$204,880	\$296,680	\$368,080

Estimates based on Delta Air Lines pilots flying a 737¹, or an A350² for 85 hours per month and an additional \$7,000 annual per diem. Note: these numbers are approximations and are not promises of future earnings.

* Only the most senior pilots will hold this position.

Typical Career Progression

With a senior captain's annual salary reaching nearly \$400,000, career pilots can expect nine million dollars in total career earnings, illustrated below according to the typical career progression*.



Delaying your career by one or two years could mean losing \$400,000 to \$800,000 in career earnings when you are a major airline captain.

*Graph based on SkyWest Airlines and Delta Air Lines pay scales and are for illustration purposes, not promises of future earnings.

Airline Pilot Seniority

Airlines operate on a seniority-based system, where the pilot employed the longest is the highest on the pilot seniority list. When hired by an airline, pilots get a seniority number that stays throughout their career at the airline, impacting their quality of life and career.

Work Schedule

Each month, the scheduling department publishes all of the schedules and routes for the next month, called lines. Each pilot bids for the "line" they would like to fly, in order of preference. The most senior pilot is awarded their first choice; the next most senior pilot will receive the second choice, and so on. When your seniority number comes up, you will be given the line that you bid for, as long as someone more senior hasn't already taken it.

Taking Vacation as an Airline Pilot

Vacation time works similarly to choosing the monthly schedule, and is also based on seniority. While methods vary between airlines, the scheduling department will typically publish a bid for vacations, and you will be given a choice of two-week time slots to take vacation during the following year. The most popular slots are usually those around holidays or summer when children are out of school.

Once vacation bids are published, pilots bid for the times they want in order of preference. The most senior pilot will be awarded their first choices, then the next most senior pilot receives their selections, and so on down the seniority list.





Airline Furloughs

The airline industry generally moves with the rest of our economy; meaning that when the economy does well, so do the airlines. When the economy struggles, the airlines can as well. While it is challenging and expensive for an airline to furlough pilots, it does sometimes happen. When an airline furloughs, they do so in reverse seniority order, where the most recently hired pilot is the first to be let go, then the next most junior, and so on. Having as much seniority as possible is crucial in situations like this, as senior pilots will be far more likely to maintain their jobs, aircraft positions, and quality of life.

Crew Bases

Each airline has different locations, or domiciles, across the country where pilots are based, called crew bases. Each pilot bids for the location they would like to be based, which is then awarded by seniority. The most desirable bases go to the most senior pilots, and the least desirable go to the most junior pilots.

By beginning your pilot career sooner rather than later, you can quickly gain seniority and prioritize choosing a desirable crew base ahead of other young pilots and live in your most desired location.

Assigned Aircraft

The type of equipment a pilot is assigned to fly is based on their seniority. Pilots have the option to bid for a particular aircraft, just like they would their schedule, vacation time, or crew base. While all pilots have a specific plane they consider to be more desirable, larger aircraft come with increased responsibility and a corresponding pay increase.

Upgrade Time

The upgrade time from captain to first officer is determined by seniority. You start flying for the airline as a first officer. As you gain experience, flight time, and seniority, you will then upgrade to captain. Being a captain means you will earn more money (often 60% more) and log pilot-in-command flight time, which you will need to move to a major airline.

Getting to the airlines first puts you ahead of other first officers on the seniority list, makes you eligible to upgrade earlier, and allows you to move up to the major airlines first. Not getting to the airlines before other pilots delays your upgrade to captain and advancement to the major airlines. Every year lost at the major airlines equates to nearly \$400,000 in annual earnings at the end of your career.

Don't lose seniority to the pilots training today. ATP's Airline Career Pilot Program is your fastest track to becoming an airline pilot.



HOW TO BECOME AN AIRLINE PILOT



Steps to Becoming an Airline Pilot

1

EARN PRIVATE PILOT CERTIFICATE

The first step in becoming a commercial pilot is to earn a Private Pilot certificate. Starting in a single-engine airplane, this stage of training focuses on the fundamentals and sets the foundation for more advanced certificates and ratings.

2

ADD INSTRUMENT RATING

After becoming a private pilot, the next step is to earn an instrument rating which allows a pilot to fly under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) and in all kinds of weather.

3

EARN COMMERCIAL PILOT CERTIFICATE

Next is earning a Commercial Pilot certificate. Pilots must meet specific experience requirements and fly to a higher standard in order to become commercial pilots, which ultimately allows them to legally be paid to fly.

4

EARN FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE

Once the commercial pilot requirements are satisfied, obtain a Flight Instructor certificate. Becoming a Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI) allows pilots to earn a living flying, while they earn the flight experience required by the airlines.

5

ADD MULTI-ENGINE RATING

To fly large passenger airliners, pilots must add multi-engine privileges to their pilot certificate. Adding a Multi-Engine rating to the Commercial Pilot certificate is the final step before building experience to meet hiring minimums.

6

GAIN EXPERIENCE

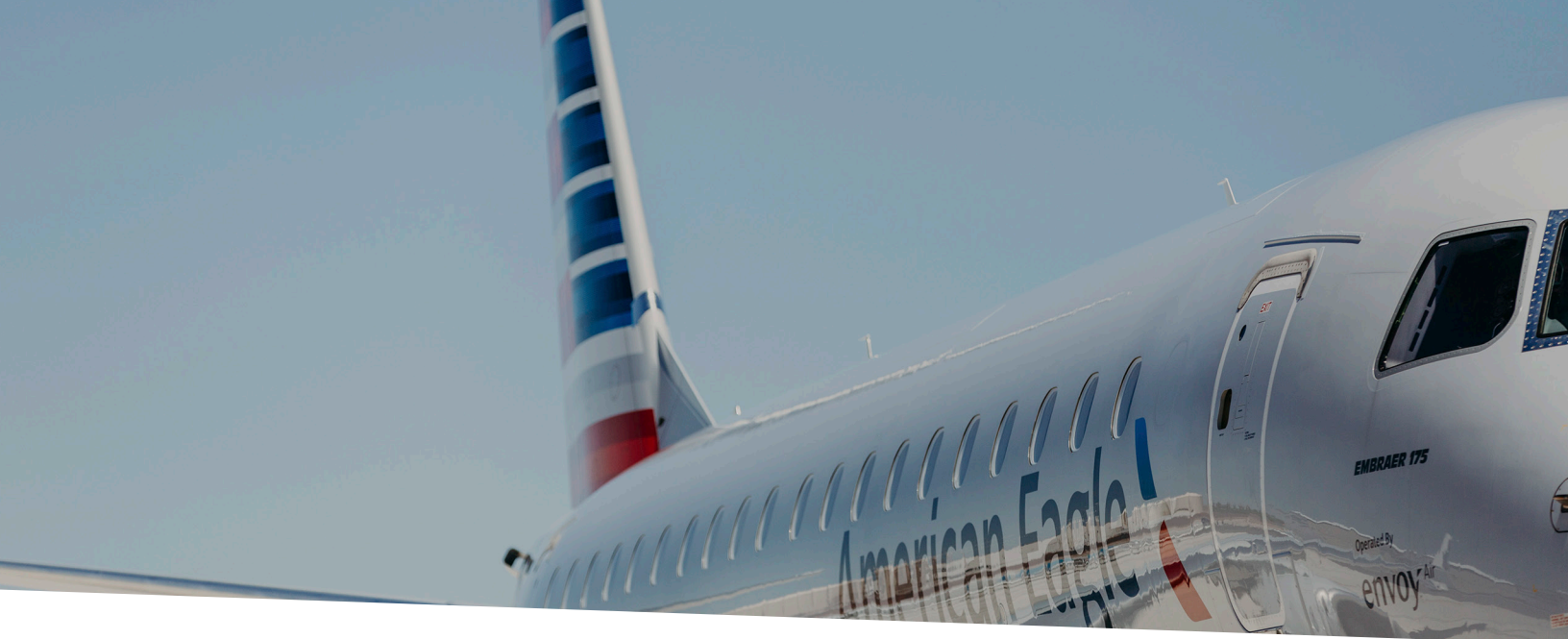
Flight instruct to gain the type of quality and relevant flight experience necessary to meet the requirements of the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate.

7

AIRLINE PILOT JOB

Upon meeting the requirements of the ATP certificate, you will meet the hiring minimums of most regional airline pilot jobs.

ATP's Airline Career Pilot Program offers you the industry-leading resources and training you need to become an airline pilot at a fixed cost in just seven months.



Airline Pilot Requirements

At a Glance


EDUCATION

No regional or major airline currently requires a degree


CERTIFICATION

ATP certificate, requiring pilots to first become a commercial pilot


EXPERIENCE

1,500 flight hours, meeting the requirements for the ATP certificate, typically earned by flight instructing


BACKGROUND CHECK

Required background check varies, but you cannot have any felonies


VISION

20/20 vision is required and can be obtained through corrective lenses; Consult an AME if you are colorblind


AGE

18 years old to begin flying as a commercial pilot and 21 years old to fly as an airline pilot

Education

Currently, regional and major airlines are suffering from a considerable shortfall of qualified pilots and have dropped the bachelor's degree requirements. If you opt to pursue a college degree, it can be in any field of study, not just aviation. Online degree programs are also an option for you to complete your bachelors degree while flying as a professional pilot. FAA pilot certificates obtained thru ATP's flight training are accepted for transfer credit by many colleges with aviation degree programs.

Certification

Airline pilots must have an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate. Airlines hire pilots once the prerequisites for this certificate are met, including 1,500 hours of flight time. To meet the flight time requirements, pilots first obtain the Commercial Pilot certificate, multi-engine and instrument ratings, and a Flight Instructor certificate, to be paid to fly and teach others. The fast track Airline Career Pilot Program includes this certification in the fastest timeline possible.

Experience

To fly as an airline pilot, you will need 1,500 hours of experience, which can be earned in about two years. This flight time can be built during your time flight instructing for ATP Flight School.

Background Check

The background check required for airline pilots varies by airline. Some airlines perform FBI 10-year background checks, driving record checks, drug tests, and credit checks as part of their standard pre-employment process. You cannot have any felonies on your record. DUI's and misdemeanors are handled at the discretion of the airline, but a significant amount of time must have passed since those events to be considered for airline pilot employment. Random drug tests are performed throughout employment.

Vision

You do not need perfect vision to be a commercial pilot. As long as your vision can be corrected to 20/20 with glasses or contacts, you are eligible for an FAA First-Class Medical Certificate, which makes you eligible to fly as a civilian professional pilot.

If you are colorblind, an FAA Medical can still be obtained by some. The restrictions will depend on the degree of colorblindness. The FAA has several mechanisms for making this determination; consult an Aeromedical Examiner (AME) for more information. Some airlines have their own restrictions that are more stringent than the FAA.

There are additional vision and health restrictions that apply, as well as waivers, so it is best to consult an FAA Aviation Medical Examiner about your specific situation.

Age

You can hold a Commercial Pilot certificate as young as 18 years old, but most airlines require applicants to be at least 21 years old, the minimum age for the ATP certificate. The mandatory retirement age is 65 years old, so if you want to become a career pilot, look at how many years' earnings you'll have before retirement and ensure that it's a worthwhile investment.

Connect with a pilot mentor on [AirlinePilot.life](https://www.AirlinePilot.life) and get answers to your questions on airline pilot eligibility and requirements.



Next Step

Begin Budgeting and Planning for Your Career.

Start mapping your airline pilot career by researching what financing options are available to you for flight training. There is no obligation to accept a loan or begin training by applying, and if you are approved, you will be eligible for a **free Admissions Training Flight with ATP**. Discover your financing options and start flying!

Apply Today at ATPFlightSchool.com/apply








FASTEST TRACK TO AIRLINE PILOT

Proven Airline-Oriented Training with a Fast Track to **All** the Major Airlines.

Airline Career Pilot Program

Get the best training in the best aircraft, with a fast track to American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Frontier Airlines, Spirit Airlines, and more through 38 airline partnerships – proven by over 1,200 graduates hired in the last 12 months.

-  Zero Time to Commercial and CFI/II/MEI
-  7 Months (5 Months with Credit for Private Pilot)
-  Full Financing and Airline Tuition Reimbursement Available

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