

Frequently Asked Questions About Helicopter Flight Training

This page highlights questions and answers related to helicopter flight training at ARH Aviation. The FAQs are organized under a general section and then according to each specific flight training course. From the helicopter flight training pages, the questions and answers are listed under each course, along with additional information related to the training program. If you have additional questions, please contact us, and we will gladly answer any questions you may have.

ARH Aviation provides helicopter flight training in Northwest Arkansas and Tulsa, Oklahoma. We are headquartered in Springdale, Arkansas. We are a full-service helicopter training facility. We provide all levels of helicopter flight training. Our helicopter flight training programs include:

- Private Pilot – Helicopter
- Commercial Pilot – Helicopter
- Instrument Rating (IFR) – Helicopter
- Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) – Helicopter
- Certified Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII) – Helicopter
- Professional Pilot Program – Helicopter
- Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) – Helicopter

In addition to our standard helicopter flight training programs, we can customize a training program for you or your organization. Please view a specific course for more information about our helicopter flight training programs.

I. General Helicopter Training Questions

What type of helicopter does ARH Aviation use for flight training?

Our primary flight training helicopter is the Robinson R-44. This platform is the leading type of helicopter in the World for civilian commercial pilots to fly.

How long does it take to get my helicopter license or rating?

When most people ask this question, they want to know the minimum requirements. The initial rating is the Private Helicopter Rating. You must be a rated pilot before you can acquire other certifications. The FAA requires a minimum of 40 hours for a helicopter Private Pilot certificate, but it typically takes most students between 50-60 flight hours to achieve their private pilot certificate. How long it takes depends on a number of different factors: availability, frequency, funding, weather, maintenance, etc. It's different for everyone.

The FAA has set minimum hours required for flight training. Is this all that is required?

In theory, yes. However, some people are not proficient enough to be a safe and competent helicopter pilot with only the regulatory minimum hours of flight training. You have to train to be able to meet the Practical Test Standards published by the FAA, not train for the minimum hours. Most places will quote prices based on the minimum hours required.

How much does it cost to get a helicopter pilot's license?

Using the R44 helicopter for your training, the price range to go through the full course of training is around \$100,000. It may cost more or less depending on your own personal aptitude or goals. The prices listed on our website are derived from our flight rate multiplied by the minimum FAA requirements. If you add together the prices for your desired ratings, that's a good ballpark figure.

Do you accept the GI Bill?

Thank you for your service; however, we do not accept GI Bill at this time. We are looking into getting approval, as we would like to allow our veterans the opportunity to use their benefits to receive helicopter flight training. A flight school must be approved by the Veterans Administration before the GI Bill can be accepted, and in order for that acceptance, you must be a Part 141 flight school.

How do I pay for flight training?

We provide several different payment options: cash, check and credit card. As the name sounds, our Pay-As-You-Go option allows you to pay for each flight immediately after that training session is completed. We are also able to provide complete financing options through Meritize.

Does ARH Aviation rent the helicopter if I have a helicopter rating already?

Yes, we will rent the helicopter for certificated pilots who complete their training with us. We do not rent helicopters out to anyone with a rotorcraft certification outside of our organization or training program.

What are the biggest hurdles you see for people completing their training?

The biggest hurdle for students completing their helicopter flight training is lack of funds. It is a big financial commitment learning to fly a helicopter. We do offer financing

through Meritize if a loan is necessary.

Am I too old to learn to fly helicopters?

It's never too late! If you are able to drive a car and have no major medical issues, you are most likely physically capable of learning to fly a helicopter. The main barriers to entry are getting and maintaining a Medical Certificate. The minimum age to solo a helicopter is 16, and you must be at least 17 to acquire your private pilot certificate.

What are the steps to becoming a helicopter pilot?

Although these steps are not set in stone, we recommend the following

1. Take an introductory flight to ensure that learning to fly helicopters is something you would like to pursue.
2. Select your school; consider key aspects of selecting a school such as location, equipment, quality of training, pricing, and more.
3. Obtain an FAA medical. To obtain a helicopter private rating (or above), the pilot needs at least a third-class medical. You do not want to invest a lot of time and effort into flight training only to find out that you have a medical condition that prevents you from achieving your flight training goals. Although you can still train without a medical, you cannot fly the aircraft by yourself.
4. Start your flight training with the school you have chosen.

II. Introductory Helicopter Flight Experience

General Information

The introductory helicopter flight lesson is a great experience. It is the recommended first step for anyone who is considering learning to fly a helicopter. No prior flight time or aviation background is required. Prior to the flight, your flight instructor will go over key aspects of the helicopter controls and some required awareness training. During the flight, you will be on dual controls with the instructor and actually fly the helicopter. You will be able to fly over Northwest Arkansas and will gradually be introduced to the controls and how to fly the helicopter. We will perform maneuvers such as climbs, descents and turns, and you will be able to spend some time practicing hovering the helicopter. Hovering is the most difficult task when flying a helicopter, and when you try, you'll see why.

How long is the introductory flight?

The introductory flight itself lasts for 30 minutes. However, you will spend approximately 1 hour prior to the flight talking to an instructor about the components of the helicopter.

Will I get to fly the helicopter during the intro flight?

Absolutely. You get to fly, using the controls, under the supervision of a certificated helicopter flight instructor.

Do I have to be on the controls?

No, but the whole point of the introductory flight is to try to fly the helicopter. If your preference is to only fly in a helicopter, one of our tours would be a better option.

How much is the introductory flight lesson?

The cost for the intro flight is \$375.

III. Private Helicopter Rating Course

Obtaining your helicopter license is a significant accomplishment. With a helicopter private pilot license you are able to fly the helicopter as pilot-in-command, meaning you are the manipulator of the controls, and are the final authority, as well as being responsible for all decisions in the helicopter. The helicopter private pilot course is intended as the starting point for new pilots that want to start flying as a career or for people that want to fly as a hobby or for personal business.

Eligibility Requirements for the Helicopter Private Pilot rating

The following items are a summary of the eligibility requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.103 for obtaining a Private Pilot Helicopter license.

- Be at least 17 years old
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language.
- Meet the aeronautical experience requirements listed below
- Receive flight training
- Pass a written knowledge test
- Pass a practical test (i.e. a Checkride)
- Hold a student pilot certificate, sport pilot certificate, or recreational pilot

certificate.

Aeronautical Experience for the Helicopter Private Pilot rating

The following items are a summary of the aeronautical experience requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.109 for obtaining a Private Pilot Helicopter license.

- At least 40 hours of total flight time
- At least 20 hours of flight training from an authorized instructor
- At least 10 hours of solo flight time

There are specific flight requirements to complete, such as cross country, night flights, that will be required during the hours listed above. We'll satisfy those.

Limitations of the Private Pilot Helicopter rating

The following is a list of key limitations, but is not an exhaustive list. Review 14 CFR 61.113 and 14 CFR 61.117 for all the specific limitations related to the private pilot helicopter license.

- With some minor exception, cannot operate as pilot in command for compensation or hire
- May not pay less than pro rata share of expenses related to a flight
- Cannot act as a second in command that is type certificated for more than one pilot
- Cannot act as a second in command for an aircraft that is carrying passengers or property for compensation or hire

FAQ's

How long does it take to get a private helicopter license?

Typically, it takes anywhere from 4-6 months to acquire this license. The regulatory minimum of hours is 40, but most people take 50-60 flight hours to certify, depending on personal aptitude. We recommend flying two or three times per week when starting out, to retain as much as possible, but learning to fly can be very flexible.

How much does it cost to get a private helicopter rating?

A private pilot certificate is going to cost in the neighborhood of \$20,000 - \$27,000 in the R44. This is going to depend largely on the student's personal ability. The goal is to pass every test first try, and an applicant must have to fly to a certain standard to pass the checkride.

With a private pilot helicopter license, will I be able to fly at night?

Yes, a helicopter pilot with a private rating is able to fly the aircraft at night, assuming the aircraft is equipped for night flying. You can also land just about anywhere, as long as you have permission from the owner of the property.

IV. Helicopter Instrument Rating

General Overview

A helicopter instrument rating is beneficial for any pilot, it makes one able to fly more precisely and confidently. The instrument rating allows pilots to operate IFR equipped helicopters in adverse weather conditions. The IFR training is often included during a portion of the commercial helicopter training, because the commercial rating is largely time building. Although you can obtain a commercial helicopter license without an IFR rating, most employers prefer to hire an IFR qualified pilot.

Eligibility Requirements for the Helicopter Instrument rating.

The following items are a summary of the eligibility requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.65 for obtaining a helicopter instrument rating.

- Hold at least a current helicopter private pilot certificate, or be concurrently applying for a private pilot certificate, with an airplane, helicopter, or powered-lift rating appropriate to the instrument rating sought;
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language.
- Meet the aeronautical experience listed below
- Receive flight training
- Pass a written knowledge test
- Pass a practical test (i.e. a Checkride)

Aeronautical Experience For A Helicopter Instrument Rating

The following items are a summary of the aeronautical experience requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.65 for obtaining a Helicopter Instrument rating.

- At least 50 hours of cross-country flight time, with at least 10 hours in a helicopter
- At least 40 hours of actual or simulated instrument time
- At least 15 hours of instrument training with an authorized instructor. During the training, there are specific flight requirements to complete, such as cross country flights, specific approaches, etc.

FAQ's

What aircraft will we use for the helicopter IFR training?

Our Robinson R-44 helicopter is equipped as an IFR trainer as the helicopter includes all the required IFR equipment for IFR training flights.

Will we fly the helicopter in actual instrument conditions?

No, the Robinson R-44 is not certified for actual IFR conditions. For a ship to be able to fly actual IFR it needs redundant systems on pretty much everything in the helicopter, as well as specific navigation equipment. We will still train IFR in the helicopter, we just won't be flying in actual IFR conditions. The student will be using a view limiting device while flying the helicopter, to simulate conditions.

What type of approaches will we fly with during the IFR training in the helicopter?

Our Robinson R-44 is equipped to fly VOR, LOC, ILS, and GPS approaches. The helicopter is equipped with a Garmin GNS430W so it is capable of conducting precision WAAS approaches.

If I have a fixed-wing IFR rating, will I have to take a written exam to add-on a helicopter IFR rating?

No. If the pilot already has a fixed-wing IFR rating, they do not need to take a written exam to add a helicopter IFR rating, only a practical exam.

Do I need to have an IFR rating in the helicopter to become a helicopter flight instructor?

Yes, to apply for a CFI certificate and to be able to take the practical test for a CFI certificate, the applicant must hold an instrument rating.

I have some airplane instrument time, will this time count towards the helicopter instrument training?

Yes. You need at least 40 hours total logged instrument or simulated time. Only 15 hours of this time needs to be in a helicopter. However, it is difficult to complete all the requirements, such as the approaches, cross-country flights, etc. within 15 hours.

V. Helicopter Commercial Pilot Course

General Overview

The commercial helicopter license is what legally allows you to get paid to fly. The commercial helicopter course is required for flying helicopters as a career. Parts of the commercial helicopter course can be completed at the same time as the Helicopter Instrument Rating (IFR) course. Although you can obtain a commercial helicopter license without an IFR rating, most employers prefer to hire an IFR qualified pilot, even if they will never have you fly in actual IFR conditions.

Eligibility Requirements for the rating

The following items are a summary of the eligibility requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.123 for obtaining a Commercial Helicopter Pilot license.

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language.
- Meet the aeronautical experience listed below
- Receive flight training
- Pass a written knowledge test
- Pass a practical test (i.e. a Checkride)
- Hold at least a private pilot certificate

Aeronautical Experience for the Commercial Helicopter Pilot rating

The following items are a summary of the aeronautical experience requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.129 for obtaining a Commercial Helicopter Pilot license.

- At least 150 hours of total flight time
- At least 100 hours of total flight time in powered aircraft
- At least 50 hours of that 100 hours in powered aircraft must be in helicopters
- At least 100 hours of pilot in command time
- At least 35 hours of pilot in command time in a helicopter
- At least 10 hours of pilot in command in cross country flight in a helicopter
- At least 20 hours to flight training in a helicopter
- At least 10 hours of solo flight time (part of the 20 hours of instruction)

During the training, there are specific flight requirements to complete, such as cross country, night flights, etc.

FAQ's

What type of work can I do with a commercial helicopter rating?

With a commercial rating you can be compensated for flying a helicopter. The most common first job is being a flight instructor (need the CFI rating) and/or a tour pilot. Aviation is an experienced based industry, the more flight hours you have the more valuable you become. Insurance on multi-million dollar machines is expensive, and potential employers want to be able to trust that you will be responsible with their aircraft. As you get flight hours, there are additional job opportunities; at 500 hours you'll meet the legal requirements to fly VFR charters under part 135 (a more strict set of rules to ensure passenger safety), at 1200 hours you are eligible to fly IFR charters under part 135, assuming you have your IFR rating and an IFR capable ship.

Will you help a new commercial helicopter pilot get a job?

If you have done your training with us, we can assist you in getting a job; it's a lot easier to hire the students we train as pilots. We can't guarantee a position, however. The helicopter industry is relatively small and networking is valuable.

I have some fixed wing time and I want my helicopter commercial rating. Does this fixed wing flight time count?

Yes. The helicopter commercial rating requires 150 total time as a pilot, and 100 hours pilot in command time (35 of those hours have to be in helicopters). If you have flown an airplane for 300 hours as pilot in command, we can use those flight hours to satisfy some of the requirements here. You will still need to acquire the helicopter specific flight time though.

VI. Certified Helicopter Flight Instructor (CFI)

General Overview

Becoming a helicopter CFI is typically what people do as the first step in their career as a professional pilot. Many initial flight jobs are as a CFI, building time and teaching people to fly. Being a CFI can be extremely rewarding; as an instructor, your skills will increase significantly and it is fun to see students progress at achieving their goals. Through the CFI training course, you will learn how to instruct helicopter students in a safe and efficient manner, as well as refine your own skills.

Eligibility Requirements for the Commercial Helicopter Flight Instructor certificate

The following items are a summary of the eligibility requirements listed in 14 CFR Part 61.183 for obtaining a Commercial Helicopter Flight Instructor rating.

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language
- Hold a commercial helicopter pilot certificate or ATP certificate, with an instrument rating or privileges appropriate for the rating being sought
- Meet the aeronautical experience listed below
- Receive flight training
- Pass a written knowledge test (fundamentals of instruction and standard FAA written)
- Pass a practical test (i.e. a Checkride)

Aeronautical Experience for the Helicopter Flight Instructor Certificate

There are no regulatory hour minimums for obtaining a helicopter flight instructor certificate; however, you'll at least need a commercial pilot certificate so you'll have to at least meet those minimums. Typically people starting training for a CFI certificate have around 150-170 total flight hours.

FAQ's

I am a fixed-wing flight instructor. Do I have to take a written test to become a helicopter flight instructor?

Yes.

VII. Helicopter Certified Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII)

General Overview

The Helicopter Certified Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII) is often referred to as a Helicopter Instrument Instructor. As a Helicopter CFII (C / F / double I), you will be able to conduct flight and ground lessons for eligible helicopter pilots working towards their helicopter instrument rating.

Helicopter Instrument Instructor

During the Helicopter Instrument Instructor Course you will learn concepts of helicopter instrument flying but will do these actions from the flight instructor seat. You will also learn the techniques to teach IFR flying concepts to students working on their helicopter instrument rating.

Eligibility Requirements for the Helicopter Instrument Instructor rating

The following items are a summary of flight instructor requirements listed in 14 CFR 61.183.

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be able to read, speak, write, and understand the English language
- Hold a helicopter pilot certificate or airline transport pilot certificate
- Hold a helicopter instrument rating
- Pass a knowledge test (if not an add-on rating)
- Pass a practical test (i.e. a Checkride)

Aeronautical Experience for the Helicopter Instrument Instructor rating

Although there are few aeronautical experience requirements, the following is the only requirement listed in 14 CFR 61.183. This PIC requirement is already met during the procedure to obtain a commercial helicopter rating.

- Log at least 15 hours as pilot in command in a helicopter

FAQ's

Does the FAA set a minimum number of hours for training to become a helicopter instrument flight instructor?

The FAA does not set a minimum number of training hours to become an instrument instructor in a helicopter (same for airplanes).

Can I take the helicopter IFR and helicopter CFII checkride with only one checkride?

No. You must take the helicopter IFR and helicopter flight instructor instrument as two different checkrides. One of the prerequisites for an instrument flight instructor is to have an instrument rating in the appropriate category and class of aircraft for the rating sought. As such, the paperwork for your helicopter IFR rating needs to be completed before being eligible for the helicopter flight instructor instrument rating. The Helicopter CFII

could be scheduled as soon as the day after passing the Helicopter IFR rating.

VIII. Helicopter Add On Rating

General Overview

For most people adding a helicopter rating, it will be the addition of a new category. The requirements for adding a helicopter rating for a pilot that already has an airplane rating are detailed below. 14 CFR 61.63 (b)

Requirements for Adding a Helicopter Rating to a Fixed Wing Certificate (other than ATP)

- Complete the training and have the applicable aeronautical experience
- Must have a logbook or training record endorsement from an authorized instructor attesting that the person was found competent in the appropriate aeronautical knowledge areas and proficient in the appropriate areas of operation.
- Must pass the practical test.
- Does not need to take an additional knowledge test, provided the applicant holds an airplane, rotorcraft, powered-lift, weight-shift-control aircraft, powered parachute, or airship rating at that pilot certificate level.

Adding an Helicopter Instrument Rating to an existing Pilot Certificate

Most people performing a helicopter instrument add on are adding to a fixed wing rating. The majority of the requirements have already been met, with the exception of 15 hours with a helicopter instructor. Although there is no minimum hours for training, most will need at least 15 hours to meet this requirement. During this time, the required proficiency should be able to be met.

Adding an Additional Helicopter Class Rating to existing Pilot Certificate

If you already have a Rotorcraft: Gyrocopter Rating, and would like to add Helicopter privileges, things are a little easier.

- You need to complete training, and receive an endorsement. There is no specific training time required.
- Must pass a practical test (i.e. checkride)
- You do not need to meet the specified training time requirements prescribed in 14 CFR 61 that apply to the pilot certificate for the aircraft class rating sought
- Does not need to take an additional knowledge test, provided the applicant holds an

airplane, rotorcraft, powered-lift, weight-shift-control aircraft, powered parachute, or airship rating at that pilot certificate level.

FAQ's

I have an existing fixed-wing commercial rating, can I add a commercial helicopter rating without getting a private helicopter rating first?

Yes. You can add a helicopter commercial rating without getting a private helicopter rating first, but starting with your private add-on is a wise decision. As 14 CFR 61.123 states; you must have at least a private rating (any category) to obtain a commercial rating. You'll need to satisfy all the requirements of 14 CFR 61.129 (c). Mainly, 50 flight hours in helicopters, 35 PIC in helicopters, and 20 hours of training in helicopters, and some helicopter solo time. SFAR 73 comes into play here as well, because if you do not have rotorcraft category privileges on your license, you must complete 20 hours of dual instruction before you can even solo the helicopter.

If I add on a rating, do I need to take another written test?

No, if you add on a rating an additional written test is not required; an exception to this is the flight instructor rating. To add on a flight instructor rating, the pilot must take a written test on the differences, or the entire specific flight instructor knowledge test.

IX. Helicopter Flight Review

General Overview

Flight reviews are conducted in our Robinson R-44 helicopter. The minimum legally required time is 1 hour of ground instruction and 1 hour of flight instruction; it typically takes longer than that though. It's not a test or re-test, it's a simple refresher of the regulations, usual flight situations, and emergency procedures.

We address the required topics within the flight review as outlined in 14 CFR 61.56, which are pretty generic:

- A. A review of the current general operating and flight rules of part 91 of this chapter; and
- B. A review of those maneuvers and procedures that, at the discretion of the person giving the review, are necessary for the pilot to demonstrate the safe exercise of the privileges of the pilot certificate.

I am a dual-rated pilot, do I need to do a flight review in both categories?

No, it is only necessary to complete one flight review in an aircraft you are rated for; however, due to SFAR 73, if you fly the R44 you need a review specifically in the R44.