



Private Licence or Commercial?

Thinking of learning to fly for pleasure or a career?

We appreciate it can be all quite confusing when looking at flying for the first time. Everyone seems to speak a strange language and use lots of acronyms, don't worry it will all become clearer. Hopefully this short article will help to answer some of your questions, if you need to know more or have a specific enquiry then please use the [contact page](#). European licences are currently governed by EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) who have recently replaced the JAA (Joint Aviation Authorities) basically a Europe wide authority, though individual countries will have differences from others. This is what we shall look at first.

The first licence to begin with is the [PPL](#) (Private Pilots Licence) with this you can fly yourself around and take passengers though you are not allowed to earn money, but your passengers can share their portion of the cost of the flight. If you wish to fly for fun or personal transport this is for you, minimum age is 17 for licence issue (there is no maximum age).

Different helicopters are rated as to their type, if you wish to fly more than one type then a minimum 5 hour [type rating course](#) will get you flying on the new helicopter. So for instance if you currently fly the Schweizer 300 and wish to also fly the Robinson R44 then a course is required on the R44

For a [Commercial Licence](#) so that you can make a career out of flying there are two options, one is an integrated course which is done full time or a part time modular course. For the modular course following on from the PPL if you wish to progress to your CPL (Commercial Licence) you need to reach the minimum 155 hours prior to starting this course, and complete the theory course and exams. Once the CPL is completed there a few options.

Firstly with a new CPL you will be lucky to be employed (but it does happen). Single engined helicopters are used for charter, surveys and all manner of aerial work. With an [Instrument Rating](#) (IR) increases the possibility of a job offshore (North Sea or further afield) this is fairly stable, reliable work but the rating is expensive (mainly because you need to do the flying portion on a twin engine helicopter) and the working environment is not for everyone.

An instructors rating (FI) is another alternative, work can be unreliable and pay not very good. The advantage is that you are building hours and experience and although instructing may not suit everyone some people find it very rewarding. It may be possible to do combine this part time with other work. Some will make a career out of instructing whilst others regard it as a temporary step, used to build hours before they 'move on' to other things, generally the more hours and experience the more employable you are. So to sum up the IR is more cost and a bigger risk though the financial rewards are greater, The FI may cost a little less although work can be variable or seasonal but with a lower financial reward, the benefits other than financial will depend very much on your personal circumstances.