



Find Your Path

The Ultimate Guide To Becoming an Airline Pilot

Step By Step All Inclusive Guide

- Discover Our Proven Framework For Getting to The Airlines Fast
- Understand the Career Outlook for Airline Pilots
- See Captain & First Officer Salary Statistics for Airline Pilots
- Learn Exactly What Steps to Complete Prior to Starting Training



About

US Flight Co. was founded with the mission of providing a path for aspiring aviators to acquire their ratings both efficiently and economically. We have successfully achieved this through careful selection of aircraft and deploying an efficient training curriculum, while offering fixed cost transparent pricing.

After years of serving student pilots we have realized just how little most prospective students know about the process of becoming an airline pilot.

We have put together this guide to offer new and existing students everything we wish we knew before we got started. A lot of time and research has gone into putting this together. We know you will get a ton of value out of this. So please take the time to digest it, and place it somewhere safe where you can come back to reference it.

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Intro

Why Become an Airline Pilot

Becoming an airline pilot is an incredibly rewarding and exciting journey. And it doesn't stop once you reach your goal!

Every day brings new places, new people, opportunities to grow and of course incredible pay!

Airline pilots are amongst the highest paid professions which don't require a 4 year college degree.

With a huge and growing demand airline pilots currently have excellent job security and salaries that are rising to record levels each year.

Airline Pilot Career Outlook

According to the [2023-2042 Boeing Pilot & Technician Outlook](#) Long term demand for newly qualified personnel remains strong as 649,000 new pilots will be needed to fly the global commercial fleet over the next 20 years.

To put this into perspective there were only 5,020 ATP (Airline Transport Pilot) certificates issued in 2021 and only 9,588 issued in 2022 throughout the U.S. And we are the global leader in pilot training.

The FAA estimates there are only 173,148 total Airline Transport Pilots currently active. Out of these the average age is 50.8. With a mandatory retirement age of 65.

All this combined with an overall projected employment rate growth of 6% from 2021 to 2031 means things are looking up for the professional pilot industry!

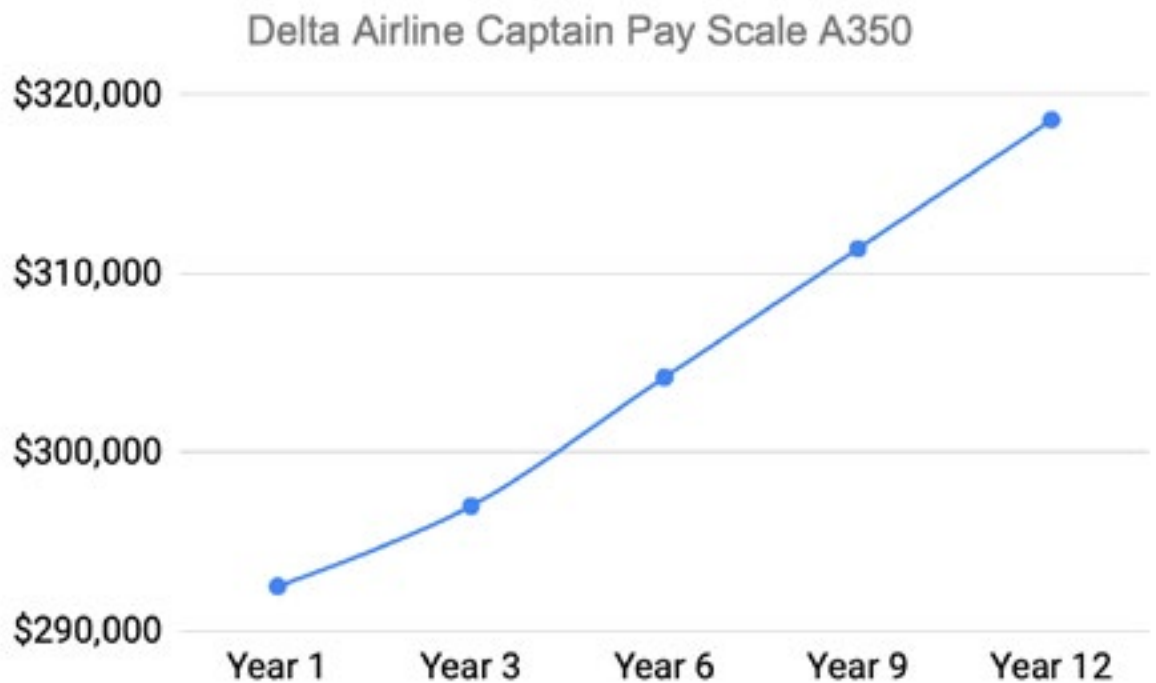
Delta airlines pilot salary will increase 34% over the next three years.

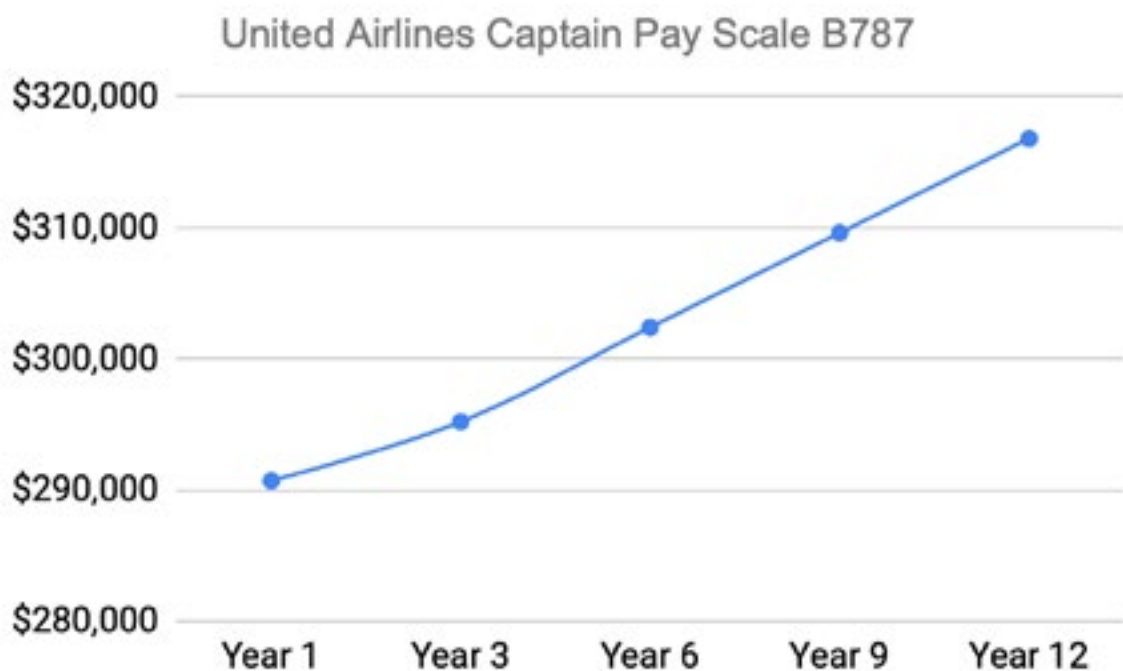
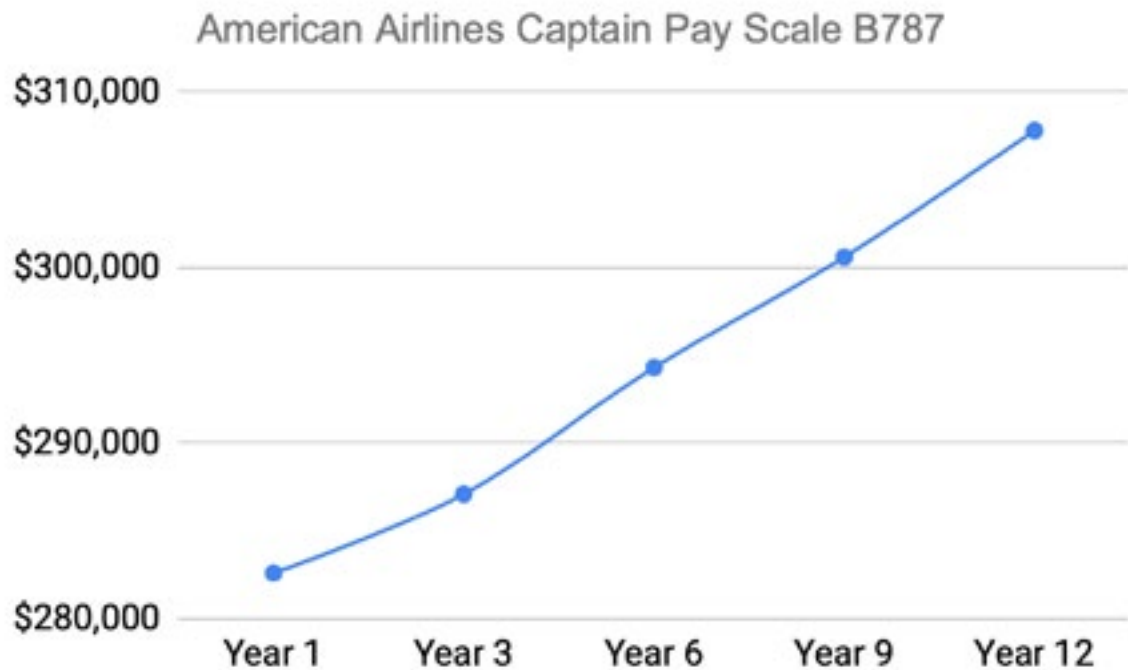
American Airlines just announced a **40% pay rise**, resulting in **top earners making \$590,000 / year!**

Airline Pilot Salaries

Major Airlines (Disclaimer)

Before we dive into airline pilot salaries I want to give you a big disclaimer. The salaries you are about to see are big, they are exciting, and they are possible. However the first salaries we are going to cover are for captain pay at major airlines. This is the big leagues. This is not where you will start. It takes years and a lot of experience to reach these positions. But I wanted to show you what is possible.





This data was sourced from Airline Pilot Central and calculated based on 75 hour monthly minimum. It does not include per diem or any other additional pay.

Now that you have seen what's possible, you are probably wondering, "What will I get paid when I first get to the regional airlines?"

We will cover that here. First year pay varies drastically year to year depending on how much demand there is. Regional airline pay also increases yearly until topped out with a large jump in pay once you make captain. Some also will pay sign on bonuses which are not included in our calculations.

Pay is calculated from company data and 75 hour monthly minimum. Does not include per diem or any additional pay.

First Year (First Officer) Pay at Regional Airlines

	\$90,000
	\$83,700
	\$81,000
	\$90,000
	\$83,700
	\$81,000
	\$81,000



Step 1

Acquire Medical Certificate

One of the most often overlooked tasks of becoming a pilot is receiving an Airman Medical Certificate. This is a certificate issued by an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME), a doctor authorized by the FAA to give pilot medical exams.

This medical screening is done to determine fitness to fly and is similar to a physical with special emphasis on certain areas.

If you defer obtaining your medical certificate it could cost you thousands of dollars! You must have a valid flight medical prior to flying solo which is a required part of training to obtain your pilot certificate. If you put off your medical screening until just before you are ready to solo, you may find out you don't qualify.

At this point you will have logged (and paid for) approximately 15 - 20 hours of flight instruction. You may still be able to move forward eventually even if you don't qualify, however the process can take months to complete.

Most people won't have an issue qualifying for a medical certificate, however there are some disqualifying conditions. Keep in mind if you have one of the following conditions and it is well controlled you may still be eligible to receive a valid medical through a process known as a special issuance. Below are the conditions that are considered disqualifying and would require a special issuance:

Disqualifying Conditions Which Require Special Issuance

- Angina pectoris
- Bipolar disease
- Cardiac valve replacement
- Coronary heart disease that has been treated or, if untreated, that has been symptomatic or clinically significant
- Diabetes mellitus requiring hypoglycemic medications
- Disturbance of consciousness without satisfactory explanation of cause
- Epilepsy
- Heart replacement
- Myocardial infarction
- Permanent cardiac pacemaker
- Personality disorder that is severe enough to have repeatedly manifested itself by overt acts
- Psychosis
- Substance abuse
- Substance dependence
- Transient loss of control of nervous system function(s) without satisfactory explanation of cause.

If you have any of the above conditions or any other condition that you think may affect your ability to safely operate an aircraft the best thing to do is reach out to an AME (Aviation Medical Examiner) and discuss your condition.

Choosing the Correct Class of Medical

There are three medical classes 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

While you are only required to have a third class medical certificate for flight training we strongly encourage everyone looking to fly as a career to get the first class out of the gate.

The first class has the most stringent requirements and we want to ensure that you will be able to acquire a first class certificate when you are ready to start working at an airline. We require our students to receive a first class certificate prior to starting the Fast Track Airline Pilot Program.

Finding an Aviation Medical Examiner

To find an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) you can attempt to use the FAA tool found here:

<https://designee.faa.gov/#/designeeLocator>

However, these records are rarely updated and you will find many of the examiners are retired or no longer offer flight medicals.

A better alternative is to figure out where you plan to do your flight training and ask an instructor or representative of that school who they recommend for getting your flight medical.

Most schools will have a specific examiner they work with that they know still does them and is pretty responsive.

We have a recommended provider for each of our training locations to make it as easy as possible for you!



Step 2

Choose The Best Flight School

Too often in this industry students blindly follow a flight instructor to failure. To prevent this you should evaluate the flight school or instructor prior to starting training. There are several key parameters that you should evaluate.

One of the most important pieces of your evaluation should be whether there is a training system in place. (ie. Syllabus). At minimum there needs to be a way to track your progress and be able to quickly see where you are at in the process.

Nothing will deter success more significantly than having an instructor who keeps your progress “in his head”. Can you imagine coming into a flight lesson and your instructor asks “What did we cover last lesson?”

How can they be sure they are covering all the material and tasks required to make you a safe and competent pilot if they have no way of knowing what has already been taught.

Another key component to evaluate when looking into a flight school is how green the instructors are. Something to be aware of is flight instructing is the most common way of building hours to hit the minimums required by the airlines. Therefore many instructors are actually pretty new pilots themselves.

If your instructor has never signed off a student for a check-ride and helped someone get their license do you want them to learn on you? Now there is a big exception to this rule. If the school has a very good “system” in place which is easy to follow. This system will ensure both you and your green instructor know exactly what needs to be done to get you ready for a checkride.

The next factor to consider is the length of the training program. Airlines pay based completely on seniority. Therefore the sooner you get to the airlines the better off you will be. Arriving at the airlines sooner will not only result in making significantly more money throughout your career, but building seniority earlier will also give you more freedom in choosing which model aircraft you fly, which routes you fly, and more importantly where your home base will be!

The last thing to consider is price. A school with transparent fixed cost pricing is always best! Some schools only charge a hourly rate.

The problem with this model is they will “quote” you based on FAA minimums. Very few students actually complete training at FAA minimums. So students typically pay significantly more than the quoted price. Always look for a fixed-cost program instead.

The ideal scenario you are looking for is a school with a solid training system that is easy to understand and follow along with experienced instructors that have many checkride passes under their belt, and a fast track style training environment that will get you through the training process in less than a year.

Key Points For Selecting the Best Flight School

- Has Proven System (ie. Syllabus)
- Experienced Instructors
- Can Get You Through Fast
- Transparent (Fixed Cost) Pricing



Step 3

Acquire Funds For Training

Once you have your medical certificate in hand and have found a school that checks out, the next step is to figure out how you are going to be paying for your training.

It is always going to benefit you to have the full amount of the training cost (plus a reserve) available up front before you even start.

Eighty percent of student pilots never complete their initial training towards becoming a private pilot. The most common reason is they run out of money. If you have to pause part way through your training due to lack of funds the overall training will take much longer and end up costing significantly more as you will have to relearn many tasks. Most likely you won't ever finish.

There are really two options. Pay out of pocket ie. out of your savings or get a loan to cover your training.

Currently there are many resources available to help you cover the costs of training. We have partnered with a couple of financial institutions that will provide you with a loan to cover the entire cost of your training while deferring payments until after your training is complete.

With most regional airlines paying close to \$100,000 for first year pay and hiring aggressively, banks are more willing than ever to loan money for pilot training.

To learn more about financing your pilot training through one of our partners go to:

<https://usflightco.com/apply-for-financing/>



Step 4

Complete Fast Track Airline Pilot Program

The goal of our Fast Track Airline Pilot Program is to provide an expedited yet affordable path for aspiring pilots to become career ready in less than 9 months. Since most airlines are unionized the sooner you get hired the better.

Why Fast Track Training is the Best

The 3+ years saved by attending a fast track training program vs a traditional training program will result in a huge benefit throughout your career. You will of course get better pay faster, but also have more seniority which means you have more options for choosing your home base, the routes you fly, etc. Having a three year advantage over other pilots also means you will make captain much quicker!

Looking at Envoy Air's pay scale found at <https://www.envoy-air.com/pilot-career-compensation/> we can see how pay is based on time with the company. If we follow the same progression but delay one by 3 years due to traditional flight training vs Fast Track you will see you could be leaving **\$554,040** on the table! This doesn't even account for the transition to a major airline!

Rating & Certificates

Fast Track Training will follow a similar order of progression to traditional flight training or programs at a university. They will just be completed much quicker. The following certificates and ratings are included in our Fast Track Airline Pilot Program.

Private Pilot Certificate

The first certificate you will work to acquire is a Private Pilot Certificate. This certificate will allow you to fly for recreation and take passengers. However you won't yet be able to be compensated for flying, that will come into play when once you acquire your commercial pilot certificate. The Private Pilot Certificate is required first, and is the first step all airline pilot's have to take.

Instrument Rating

The Instrument Rating is an add-on to your Pilot's Certificate and allows you to legally fly in IFR conditions which means you can fly in zero visibility such as through clouds.

When studying for the instrument rating you will go into detail on subjects such as navigation, weather, hazards, and refining control.

Commercial Pilot Certificate

The Commercial Pilot Certificate is the next big milestone in your aviation career. This certificate will allow you to fly for hire.

Meaning you can carry freight and / or passengers and get paid to fly! While training for this certificate you will learn new maneuvers while continuing to refine your previously learned skills and knowledge.

Certified Flight Instructor Certificate (CFI)

Once you acquire your Certified Flight Instructor Certificate you will be able to teach other people how to fly. Studying for this certificate will include flight from the right seat, learning about the fundamentals of teaching, and refining your level of knowledge.

Certified Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII)

This rating is added on to your Certified Flight Instructor Certificate and is required for training students for their instrument rating.

Multi Engine & Multi Engine Instructor (MEI)

The Multi Engine rating allows you to fly aircraft with more than 1 engine while the Multi Engine Instructor rating allows you to teach others how to fly these aircraft. We go above minimum hour requirements to ensure you have the 25 hour minimum most airlines will require.



Step 5

The Perfect Resume

Hiring managers receive dozens of applicants whether trying to fill a position at a major airline or just a flight instructor position.

It is critical that your resume stands out from the rest and gives the person reviewing it critical information at a glance.

It should look professional and paint a picture in their mind that you're an excellent choice for the position they are filling.

Some major airlines won't actually require a resume, however having a professional resume will make you stand out and allow you to convey critical information that may not have a place on the company application.

Components That Make The Perfect Resume

- Keep It to One Page
- Have Your Resume Professionally Printed
- Use the Same Paper for Cover Letter and Resume
- Don't Leave Employment Gaps Except for School
- List Only Adult Work History
- Include Flight Time, Certificates, and Ratings
- List Types of Aircraft Flown
- Include Community Involvement
- Include Awards and Honors

Students who complete our Fast Track Airline Pilot Program receive access to our Perfect Resume Template. Simply plug in your information and send it off for printing!



Step 6

Sharpen Your Interview Skills

At this point you will have many interviews in your future. You will be interviewing for a flight instructor position, regional airline, and hopefully major airline one day.

Knowing what to expect and what questions to be prepared to answer will make your interview go smoothly and help you to stand out from the pack.

One of the best things you can do is practice by doing mock interviews. Also ask other pilots who finish the program ahead of you what questions they are getting asked so you have a good idea how best to prepare. It should go without saying, show up to your interview with a professional appearance. Consider what airline pilots typically wear and use that as your guide.



Step 7 | Apply To Airline Pathway Programs

Most regional airlines offer a direct pathway program. This is the best way to have a job lined up before you hit your hour minimums. Some airlines will require to have certain ratings or certificates before applying, but some will let you apply as early as the private pilot certificate.

This usually involves an interview with the airline. Being accepted typically includes receiving a conditional offer of employment. Many airlines will offer several additional benefits that start immediately such as beginning to build seniority, travel benefits, mentorship, and more.

We have partnered with several airlines to make this process a breeze for our Fast Track Airline Pilot Program students.



Step 8

Entry Level Pilot Job

Great, you finally finished all the training and received all your ratings. Let's get to the airlines.

Not so fast! As of this time the minimum hour requirement to be eligible for an ATP (Airline Transport Certificate) is 1500 hours. After you finished your training you will only have around 300 hours.

To get to the 1500 hour mark you will need an entry level commercial pilot job such as flight instructing, flying pipeline patrol, or flying skydivers. These are just a few examples of entry level pilot jobs. As you start to build time you will be eligible for other jobs such as flying freight in small turboprops and flying for small charter operators.

To find and apply for aviation jobs you can check out these aviation specific job boards in addition to the normal job searching sites such as indeed.

- <https://www.jsfirm.com>
- <https://www.avianation.com>
- <https://www.avjobs.com/index.asp>
- <https://www.aopa.org/about/hr/aviation-job-postings>

Also be sure to upload an updated resume and keep your profile updated on these sites as you may have recruiters reach out to you with great opportunities as well.



Step 9

Hit ATP Minimums

At this point you will have an entry level pilot job and have began the time building process. You will continue this until you hit ATP Minimums which is when you will have qualified for an ATP (Airline Transport Pilot) certificate.

ATP Minimum Requirements

1500 Hours Total Time

500 Hours Cross Country Time

100 Hours Night Time

75 Hours Instrument Time

50 Hours in Class of Aircraft for Rating

250 Hours PIC Time

Be 23 Years Old

Hold a Commercial Pilot Certificate and Instrument Rating



Step 10

Fly For a Regional Airline

Regional airlines are the smaller airlines that often fly under a major airline brand name. This is the next step toward flying for a major airline.

You will start out as a First Officer, and after gaining enough experience and seniority you will eventually move over to Captain. Most regional airlines have some sort of pass through program to one of the major airlines.

There will usually be a flight hour and time requirement before you are eligible. For example United Airlines requires 2000 hours and two years flying for a regional before being eligible to apply.



Step 11

Transition to Major Airline

The major airlines are the equivalent of the big leagues. This is where most aspiring pilots hope to one day end up. The pay is great, and as you build your seniority the life-style can be pretty great as well!

This is the pinnacle. Once here it is smooth sailing. One thing to consider before reaching this step is to have an idea which major airline you want to end up at.

With many regionals offering direct paths to the major airlines they fly under you should consider what the path looks like to get where you want to go and choose your regional based off of that.

That's it. You now know our proven process to get to the airlines!



Step 12

Get Started Today

Now that you understand what it takes to get to the airlines, I want you to know that you can do this! You just need the right people to guide you along the way.

You also now understand the importance of getting this done as soon as possible. The longer you wait the more money you are missing out on. Get going as soon as possible so you can start building seniority!

To get started enroll in our Fast Track Airline Pilot Program:
<https://usflightco.com/airline-professional-pilot-program/>

Thank you for reading, We hope to see you in the skies soon!