



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
Federal Aviation  
Administration

# Advisory Circular

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**Subject:** English Language Skill Standards  
Required by 14 CFR Parts 61, 63,  
and 65

**Date:** 12/11/13

**AC No:** 60-28A

**Initiated by:** AFS-800

**Change:**

**1. PURPOSE.** This advisory circular (AC) provides guidance for airman applicants, training organizations, designated examiners, and aviation safety inspectors (ASI) in determining English language skills currently required for airman certification as required by the Administrator under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts 61, 63, and 65.

**2. CANCELLATION.** This AC cancels AC 60-28 CHG 1, English Language Skill Standards Required by 14 CFR Parts 61, 63, and 65, dated 8/4/10.

**3. BACKGROUND.** There are distinct regulatory English language eligibility requirements in part 61 for pilots and flight and ground instructors; part 63 for Flight Engineers and flight navigators; and part 65 for air traffic control (ATC) tower operators, aircraft dispatchers, mechanics, repairmen, and parachute riggers. In addition, the standards found in International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 1 require that certain Airman Certificates have an endorsement for English language proficiency in order for those airmen to act as required crew of an aircraft internationally.

**a. Part 61 Requirements: Certification of Pilots, Flight Instructors, and Ground Instructors.** Eligibility requirements contained in part 61 require pilots, flight instructors, and ground instructors to be able to read, write, speak, and understand the English language. If for medical reasons, an applicant is unable to meet these proficiency requirements, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may place the appropriate limitation on the certificate.

**b. Part 63 Requirements: Certification of Flight Crewmembers Other than Pilots.**

**(1) Flight Engineers.** Eligibility requirements contained in part 63, § 63.31 require an applicant for a Flight Engineer Certificate to be able to read, speak, and understand the English language, or have an appropriate limitation placed on the certificate.

**(2) Flight Navigators.** Eligibility requirements contained in § 63.51 require an applicant for a Navigator Certificate to be able to read, write, speak, and understand the English language.

**c. Part 65 Requirements: Certification of Airmen Other than Flight Crewmembers.**

**(1) Air Traffic Control Tower Operators.** Eligibility requirements contained in § 65.33(c) require an applicant for an Air Traffic Control Tower Operator Certificate to be

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able to read, write, and understand the English language and speak it without accent or impediment of speech that would interfere with two-way radio conversation.

**(2) Aircraft Dispatchers.** Eligibility requirements contained in § 65.53(b)(2) require an applicant for an Aircraft Dispatcher Certificate to have the ability to read, speak, write and understand the English language. Any applicant who fails to demonstrate this ability will not be issued an Aircraft Dispatcher Certificate.

**(3) Mechanics and Repairmen.** Eligibility requirements contained in §§ 65.71(a)(2) and 65.101(a)(6) require an applicant for a Mechanic or a Repairman Certificate and associated ratings to be able to read, write, speak, and understand the English language. An applicant who does not meet this requirement, and who is employed outside of the United States by a U.S. air carrier, will have his or her certificate endorsed, “Valid only outside the United States.”

**(4) Light-Sport Aircraft Repairmen.** Eligibility requirements contained in § 65.107(a) require an applicant for a Repairman Certificate (light-sport aircraft) to be able to read, speak, write, and understand English. If for medical reasons an applicant cannot meet these requirements, the FAA may place limitations on the Repairman Certificate.

**(5) Parachute Rigger.** Eligibility requirements in § 65.113(a)(2) require an applicant for a Parachute Rigger Certificate to be able to read, write, speak, and understand the English language. Where citizens of Puerto Rico, or persons employed by a U.S. air carrier outside of the United States, are concerned, applicants who do not meet this requirement will be issued a certificate that is valid only in Puerto Rico or only while the person is employed outside of the United States by that air carrier, as applicable.

**d. ICAO Annex 1 Requirements.** As of March 5, 2008, ICAO Annex 1’s personnel licensing language proficiency standards require the following persons to have the “English Proficient” endorsement on their Airman Certificates:

- Persons holding a Private, Commercial, or Airline Transport Pilot Airman Certificate with an airplane or helicopter rating issued under part 61,
- Persons holding a Flight Engineer or Flight Navigator Airman Certificate issued under part 63, and
- Persons holding an Air Traffic Control Tower Operator Airman Certificate issued under part 65.

**(1)** A part 61 applicant for a Private, Commercial, or Airline Transport Pilot Airman Certificate with an airplane or helicopter rating meeting the English eligibility standards of part 61 will be eligible for an Airman Certificate with the “English Proficient” endorsement. An applicant not meeting the English language eligibility requirements of part 61 will not be eligible for a Private, Commercial, or Airline Transport Pilot Airman Certificate, with an airplane or helicopter rating. An applicant who cannot hear or speak due to medical reasons may be eligible for an Airman Certificate with specific operational limitations under part 61.

**(2)** A part 63 applicant for a Flight Engineer or Flight Navigator Airman Certificate meeting the English eligibility requirements of part 63 will be eligible for a certificate with the

“English Proficient” endorsement. An applicant not meeting the English language eligibility requirements of part 63 will not be eligible for a Flight Engineer or Flight Navigator Airman Certificate with the “English Proficient” endorsement. In that case, the applicant may be eligible for an Airman Certificate with an appropriate limitation in accordance with part 63, but may not be able to act as required crew of an airplane or helicopter outside the United States, its territories, or possessions.

**e. Consequences of Failing to Meet the English Language Proficiency Requirements.**

Unless otherwise authorized by the Administrator, no person may exercise the privileges of an Airman Certificate issued under part 61, 63, or 65 unless that person meets the English language proficiency requirements of those parts. If a person holding an Airman Certificate issued under these parts does not meet the English language proficiency requirements, the Administrator will take action to suspend, revoke, or reissue that person’s Airman Certificate; this action is permitted under Title 49 of the United States Code (49 U.S.C.) § 44709.

**4. COMPETENCY GUIDANCE.** Designated examiners and ASIs share the responsibility for ensuring applicants meet the English language requirements. Before accepting the application and beginning the practical test for certification, ASIs and/or designated examiners must evaluate the applicant’s English proficiency. The FAA English proficiency standards currently required for airman certification should be assessed in accordance with the guidelines contained in Appendix 1 of this AC as well as Operational Level 4 of the ICAO Language Proficiency Scale:

- Determine the applicant’s ability to read, write, speak, and understand the English language;
- Evaluate the applicant’s speech and accent, if any, relative to sentence patterns, sentence structure, spelling of written text; and
- Evaluate the applicant’s ability to use standard terminology required for radiotelephony communications.

**a. For All Certificate Testing.** If deemed necessary by the examiner and/or the ASI in order to assist the determination of the applicant’s English language proficiency, the examiner will require the applicant to read a section of a technical manual. After completing this step, the examiner will require the applicant to write and explain his or her interpretation of the reading. An appropriate technical manual in this sense means an Airplane Flight Manual (AFM), a maintenance manual, or any other publication appropriate for the certificate or desired rating.

**b. For Aircraft Dispatcher Practical Tests.** In addition to the requirements contained in subparagraph 3a, examiners will require each applicant to read and demonstrate an understanding of Aviation Routine Weather Reports (METAR) and Terminal Aerodrome Forecasts (TAF). Through simulation, the applicant must be able to demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly and concisely using the various methods of radiotelephony communications such as telephone, satellite phone, very high frequency (VHF) and high frequency (HF) radio.

**c. For Flight Service Station (FSS) En Route Service Practical Tests.** For practical tests involving airport tower services and FSS en route services, examiners will simulate typical communications and require the applicant to copy and read back the communication.

**d. For ATC Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) Clearance Practical Tests.** For practical tests requiring the receipt and acknowledgment of air traffic control IFR clearances (such as an instrument rating for a Pilot Certificate), examiners will simulate typical clearance deliveries and require the applicant to copy and read back the clearances.

**e. Receiving the “English Proficient” Endorsement.** New applicants who successfully meet the already existent language proficiency standards found in parts 61, 63, and 65 (and clarified in the attached appendix) will receive the “English Proficient” endorsement on their Airman Certificates to comply with ICAO requirements. Current airmen who have already successfully demonstrated their English proficiency required under the FAA regulations are strongly encouraged to apply for replacement certificates with an “English Proficient” endorsement to document their actual compliance with ICAO requirements.

**f. When English Language Skills Remain in Question.** All airman applicants whose English language skills are still in question will be referred to the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) for evaluation by an ASI.

**5. RESPONSIBILITY.** It is important that all applicants for Airman Certificates meet the basic eligibility requirements and demonstrate their ability to read, write, speak, and understand the English language (see paragraph 3b(1) of this AC for subtle differences in Flight Engineer requirements). Each applicant must demonstrate an ability to mentally grasp critical information, which often must be read and understood while conducting a variety of aviation operations. Each applicant must also be able to understand and clearly communicate in language used in radiotelephony communications. The responsibility for ensuring applicants meet the English language eligibility and proficiency requirements is shared by flight and ground instructors, aviation schools, designated examiners, and ASIs. Ultimately, the authorized designated examiner and the ASI are required to evaluate each applicant’s eligibility, including English proficiency, prior to beginning the practical test or accepting an application for an Airman Certificate or rating, or accepting an application for a medical examination issued under 14 CFR part 67.

**6. CONTACT.** For additional information, please contact FAA Flight Standards Service (AFS) General Aviation and Commercial Division (AFS-800), 800 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20591, phone 202-385-9600.



/s/

John Barbagallo  
Director, Flight Standards Service

**APPENDIX 1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE ELIGIBILITY STANDARD FOR AN AIRMAN  
CERTIFICATE ISSUED UNDER 14 CFR PARTS 61, 63, and 65**

The following English language proficiency standards\* must be met by the applicant and evaluated by the designated examiner or aviation safety inspector (ASI) when determining if the applicant meets the English language eligibility requirements of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts 61, 63, and 65.

- 1. PRONUNCIATION.** Assumes that English is not the applicant's first language and that the applicant has a dialect or accent that is intelligible to the aeronautical community. Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the applicant's first language, but only sometimes interfere with ease of understanding.
- 2. STRUCTURE.** Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task. Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually well controlled by the applicant. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely interfere with meaning.
- 3. VOCABULARY.** The applicant's vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. The applicant can often paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances.
- 4. FLUENCY.** The applicant produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. There may be occasional loss of fluency on transition from rehearsed or formulaic speech to spontaneous interaction, but this does not prevent effective communication. The applicant can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting.
- 5. COMPREHENSION.** Comprehension by the applicant is mostly accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the dialect, accent, or variety used is sufficiently intelligible. When the applicant is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events, comprehension may be slower or require clarification strategies.
- 6. INTERACTIONS.** Responses by the applicant are usually immediate, appropriate, and informative. The applicant initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. The applicant deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming, or clarifying.

\* Adopted from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Language Proficiency Rating Scale, to the Operational Level 4. The Proficiency Scale is found in ICAO Document 9835 and the attachment in ICAO Annex 1.