


U.S. Airspace Classes

([Airspace at a Glance Card](#))



- [Definitions](#)
- [Easy-to-Read Chart for VFR Flight](#)
- [U.S. Airspace Classes](#)
- [Additional Copies](#)

 U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Definitions

Definitions are from the Pilot/Controller Glossary (7110.65H) and are listed in alphabetical order.

Class G - (uncontrolled airspace) That airspace not designated as Class A, B, C, D, or E.

Controlled Airspace - An airspace of defined dimensions within which air traffic control service is provided to IFR flights and to VFR flights in accordance with the airspace classification.

Note 1 - Controlled airspace is a generic term that covers Class A, Class B, Class C, Class D, and Class E airspace.

Note 2 - Controlled airspace is also that airspace within which all aircraft operators are subject to certain pilot qualifications, operating rules, and equipment requirements in FAR Part 91 (for specific operating requirements, please refer to FAR Part 91). For IFR operations in any class of controlled airspace, a pilot must file an IFR flight plan and receive an appropriate ATC clearance. Each Class B, Class C, and Class D airspace area designated for an airport contains at least one primary airport around which the airspace is designated (for specific designations and descriptions of the airspace classes, please refer to FAR Part 71).

Controlled airspace in the United States is designated as follows:

Class A - Generally, that airspace from 18,000 feet MSL up to and including FL600, including the airspace overlying the waters within 12 nautical miles of the coast of the 48 contiguous States and Alaska. Unless otherwise authorized, all persons must operate their aircraft under IFR.

Class B - Generally, that airspace from the surface to 10,000 feet MSL surrounding the nation's busiest airports in terms of IFR operations or passenger enplanements. The configuration of each Class B airspace area is individually tailored and consists of a surface area and two or more layers (some Class B airspace areas resemble upside-down wedding cakes), and is designed to contain all published instrument procedures once an aircraft enters the airspace. An ATC clearance is required for all aircraft to operate in the area, and all aircraft that are so cleared receive separation services within the airspace. The cloud clearance requirement for VFR operations is "clear of clouds."

Class C - Generally that airspace from the surface to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation (charted in MSQ surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower, are serviced by a radar approach control, and that have a certain number of IFR operations or passenger enplanements. Although the configuration of each Class C airspace area is individually tailored, the airspace usually consists of a surface area with a 5NM radius, and an outer circle with a 1 ONM radius that extends from 1,200 feet to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation. Each person must establish two-way radio communications with the ATC facility providing air traffic services prior to entering the airspace and thereafter maintain those communications while within the airspace. VFR aircraft are only separated from IFR aircraft within the airspace.

Class D - Generally, that airspace from the surface to 2,500 feet above the airport elevation (charted in MSQ surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower. The configuration of each Class D airspace area is individually tailored and when instrument procedures are published, the airspace will normally be designed to contain the procedures. Arrival extensions for instrument approach procedures may be Class D or Class E airspace. Unless otherwise authorized, each person must establish two-way radio communications with the ATC facility providing air traffic services prior to entering the airspace and thereafter maintain those communications while in the airspace. No separation services are provided to VFR aircraft.

Class E - Generally, if the airspace is not Class A, Class B, Class C, or Class D, and it is controlled airspace, it is Class E airspace. Class E airspace extends upward from either the surface or a designated altitude to the overlying or adjacent controlled airspace. When designated as a surface area, the airspace will be configured to contain all instrument procedures. Also in this class are Federal airways, airspace beginning at either 700 or 1,200 feet AGL used to transition to/from the terminal or enroute environment, enroute domestic, and offshore airspace areas designated below 18,000 feet MSL. Unless designated at a lower altitude, Class E airspace begins at 14,500 MSL over the United States, including that airspace overlying the waters within 12 nautical miles of the coast of the 48 contiguous States and Alaska. Class E airspace does not include the airspace 18,000 MSL or above.

Service - A generic term that designates functions or assistance available from or rendered by air traffic control. For example, Class C service would denote the ATC services provided within a Class C airspace area.

Special VFR Operations - Aircraft operating in accordance with clearances in Class B, C, D, or E surface areas in weather conditions less than the basic VFR weather minimum. Such operations must be requested by the pilot and approved by ATC.

Surface Area - The airspace contained by the lateral boundary of the Class B, C, D, or E airspace designated for an airport that begins at the surface and extends upward.

Terminal VFR Radar Service - A national program instituted to extend the terminal radar services provided to instrument flight rules (IFR) aircraft to visual flight rules (VFR) aircraft. The program is divided into four types of service referred to as basic radar service, terminal radar service area (TRSA) service, Class B service and Class C service. The type of service provided at a particular location is contained in the Airport/Facility Directory.

1. Basic Radar Service: These services are provided for VFR aircraft by all commissioned terminal radar facilities. Basic radar service includes safety alerts, traffic advisories, limited radar vectoring when requested by the pilot, and sequencing at locations where procedures have been established for this purpose and/or when covered by a letter of agreement. The purpose of this service is to adjust the flow of arriving IFR and VFR aircraft into the traffic pattern in a safe and orderly manner and to provide traffic advisories to departing VFR aircraft.

2. TRSA Service: This service provides, in addition to basic radar service, sequencing of all IFR and participating VFR aircraft to the primary airport and separation between all participating VFR aircraft. The purpose of this service is to provide separation between all participating VFR aircraft and all IFR aircraft operating within the area defined as a TRSA.

3. Class C Service: This service provides, in addition to basic radar service, approved separation between IFR and VFR aircraft, and sequencing of VFR arrivals to the primary airport.

4. Class B Service: This service provides, in addition to basic radar service, approved separation of aircraft based on IFR, VFR, and/or weight, and sequencing of VFR arrivals to the primary airport(s).

An Easy-to-Read Chart for VFR Flight

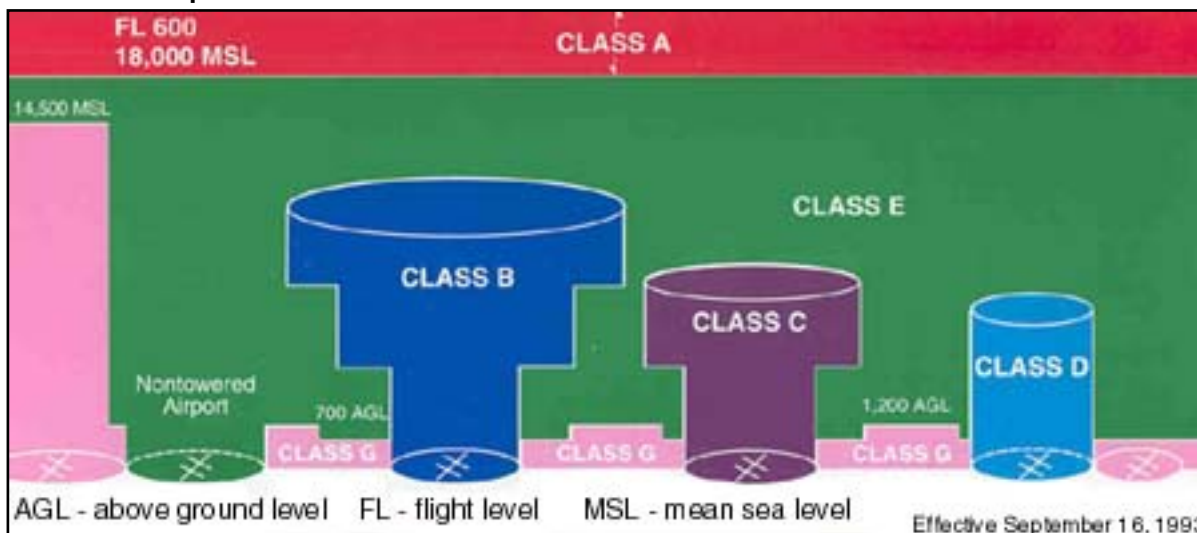
Airspace Features	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Class E	Class G
Entry Requirements	ATC Clearance	ATC Clearance	Prior two-way communications	Prior two-way communications	None	None
Minimum Pilot Qualifications	Instrument rating	Private or student certificate location dependent	Student certificate	Student certificate	Student certificate	Student certificate
Two-way Radio Communications	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not required	Not required
Special VFR Allowed*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
VFR Visibility Minimum	N/A	3 Statute miles**	3 Statute miles**	3 Statute miles**	3 Statute miles**	1 Statute mile**
VFR Minimum Distance from Clouds	N/A	Clear of clouds	500 feet below, 1,000 feet above, 2,000 feet horizontally**	500 feet below, 1,000 feet above, 2,000 feet horizontally**	500 feet below, 1,000 feet above, 2,000 feet horizontally**	Clear of clouds**
VFR Aircraft Separation	N/A	All	IFR	Runway operations	None	None
Traffic Advisories	Yes	Yes	Yes	Workload Permitting	Workload Permitting	Workload Permitting
Former Airspace Equivalent	Positive control area (PCA)	Terminal control area (TCA)	Airport radar service area (ARSA)	Airport traffic area and control zone	General controlled airspace	Uncontrolled airspace

* Authorized by an ATC clearance and conducted within the lateral boundaries of the surface area.

** Flight visibility and cloud clearance requirements differ for operations below 1,200 feet AGL, above 1,200 feet AGL but below 10,000 feet MSL, above 10,000 feet MSL, day, night, or student pilot. See FARs 61.89 and 91.155 for specifics.

NOTE: IFR operations in controlled airspace require filing an IFR flight plan and an appropriate ATC clearance.

U.S. Airspace Classes



Additional Copies

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