Acronyms Cheat Sheet

Every checkride memory aid you'll be asked to recite — organized by category. Fold a corner on the page that always trips you up.

IFR

5 Ts — Time, Turn, Twist (HSI/OBS), Throttle, Talk

Standard checklist at every fix or hold entry.
Ref: IFH Ch 5

CRAFT — Cruise (clearance limit), Route, Altitude, Frequency, Transponder

Pre-printed clearance copy template.
Ref: AIM 5-2-1

AVE-F — Assigned, Vectored, Expected, Filed (route order); MEA = Minimum, Expected, Assigned (altitude — highest of)

Lost-comms IFR procedure: route uses AVE-F priority; altitude uses the highest of MEA/Expected/Assigned.
Ref: §91.185

TANT-EM — Type, Approach course, Navaids, Timing, Entry/FAF, Missed approach

Approach-briefing flow some CFIIs teach in lieu of a published-plate flow.
Ref: IFH Ch 10

PT vs NoPT — Procedure Turn required · or NoPT (no procedure turn) when depicted on the plate

PT not required when: vectored to final, on the holding-side of a teardrop or hold-in-lieu, or when 'NoPT' is depicted.
Ref: AIM 5-4-9

MEA / MOCA / MORA / OROCA — Minimum Enroute Altitude / Minimum Obstruction Clearance Altitude / Minimum Off-Route Altitude / Off-Route Obstruction Clearance Altitude

Enroute IFR altitudes — MEA guarantees nav reception & obstacle clearance; MOCA only obstacle within 22 NM and signal within 22 NM of VOR; MORA / OROCA are emergency reference altitudes.
Ref: AIM 5-1-13

DA / DH / MDA — Decision Altitude (precision, MSL) / Decision Height (precision, AGL) / Minimum Descent Altitude (non-precision)

Approach minimums. DA/DH triggers immediate go-around if visual references not in sight; MDA is a floor.
Ref: §91.175

FAF / IAF / IF / MAP — Final Approach Fix / Initial Approach Fix / Intermediate Fix / Missed Approach Point

Standard approach segment fixes.
Ref: AIM 5-4

LNAV / LP / LPV / LNAV+V — Lateral Navigation (NPA) / Localizer Performance (lateral, sharper) / Localizer Performance with Vertical guidance (precision-like, WAAS) / LNAV with advisory vertical (no minima credit)

RNAV (GPS) approach minima types — only LPV gives DA-style precision minima.
Ref: AIM 1-1-19

RAIM / WAAS / SBAS — Receiver Autonomous Integrity Monitoring / Wide Area Augmentation System / Satellite-Based Augmentation System

GPS integrity systems. RAIM is required for TSO-C129 IFR GPS; WAAS is the US SBAS used by TSO-C145/146.
Ref: AIM 1-1-17, AIM 1-1-19

Risk Management

PAVE — Pilot, Aircraft, enVironment, External pressures

Pre-flight risk identification framework.
Ref: PHAK Ch 17, AIH Ch 7

5 Ps — Plan, Plane, Pilot, Passengers, Programming

In-flight risk decision points (use at every phase of flight).
Ref: AIH Ch 7

DECIDE — Detect, Estimate, Choose, Identify, Do, Evaluate

Six-step decision-making model.
Ref: AIH Ch 7, PHAK Ch 17

3P — Perceive, Process, Perform

Continuous loop for in-flight situational awareness.
Ref: AIH Ch 7

IM SAFE — Illness, Medication, Stress, Alcohol, Fatigue, Eating

Personal pre-flight readiness check.
Ref: AIH Ch 7, PHAK Ch 17

5 Hazardous Attitudes — Anti-authority, Impulsivity, Invulnerability, Macho, Resignation

Antidotes — Follow rules; Not so fast; It could happen to me; Taking chances is foolish; I'm not helpless.
Ref: AIH Ch 7, AC 60-22

CARE — Consequences, Alternatives, Reality, External pressures

Risk-management evaluation tool — apply when assessing in-flight changes.
Ref: AIH Ch 7

TEAM — Transfer (to autopilot/copilot), Eliminate, Accept, Mitigate

Risk control choices once a hazard is identified.
Ref: AIH Ch 7

CRM / SRM / TEM — Crew Resource Management / Single-Pilot Resource Management / Threat & Error Management

Resource management frameworks scaled by crew size and operating environment.
Ref: AIH Ch 7

V-speeds

Vne / Vno — Never-exceed speed (red line) / Maximum structural cruising speed (green arc upper, yellow arc lower)

Vno is the upper limit of the green arc; Vne is the red line.
Ref: PHAK Ch 5; POH

Va — Maneuvering speed

Maximum speed at which full deflection of a single primary control surface will not exceed structural limits. Decreases at lower weight.
Ref: PHAK Ch 5; POH

Vfe — Maximum speed with flaps extended

White arc upper limit.
Ref: POH

Vso / Vs1 — Stall speed in landing config / Stall speed clean

Vso = white arc lower limit; Vs1 = green arc lower limit.
Ref: POH

Vx / Vy — Best angle of climb / Best rate of climb

Vx = max altitude per ground distance (use to clear obstacles). Vy = max altitude per unit time.
Ref: PHAK Ch 11; POH

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Vg — Best glide speed (max L/D)

Engine-out cruise — gives the maximum glide distance.
Ref: POH

Vmc — Minimum control airspeed (multi-engine, critical engine inoperative)

Multi-engine awareness item — verify with POH for the specific airplane.
Ref: AFH Ch 13; POH

Aerodynamics (Helicopter)

ETL / IGE / OGE — Effective Translational Lift / In Ground Effect / Out of Ground Effect

ETL ≈ 16–24 kt — induced flow drops & rotor efficiency rises. IGE within ½ rotor diameter of the surface; OGE above.
Ref: HFH Ch 2

LTE — Loss of Tail Rotor Effectiveness

Uncommanded yaw at low airspeed / high power. Recovery: full opposite pedal, forward cyclic, reduce collective if obstacles permit.
Ref: AC 90-95, HFH Ch 11

VRS / SWP — Vortex Ring State / Settling With Power

Power applied + descent >~300 fpm + airspeed < ETL into own downwash. Recovery: forward cyclic + reduce collective, or Vuichard recovery.
Ref: HFH Ch 11

RBS — Retreating Blade Stall

Hazard at high airspeed / high gross weight / turbulence. Recovery: lower collective, slow down, descend to denser air.
Ref: HFH Ch 5

LFA / Translating Tendency — Left-Forward Attitude / Lateral drift in a hover from tail-rotor thrust (right drift in CCW main rotor)

Translating tendency is compensated by mast tilt or trim — pilot input is small.
Ref: HFH Ch 2

Emergency

5 Cs — Climb, Communicate, Confess, Comply, Conserve

Lost-procedures sequence (VFR or IFR with disorientation).
Ref: PHAK Ch 16

ABCD — Airspeed (best glide), Best field, Checklist (restart flow), Declare (mayday, squawk 7700)

Single-engine engine-failure flow (airplane).
Ref: AFH Ch 17

PARE — Power idle, Ailerons neutral, Rudder full opposite to spin, Elevator briskly forward through neutral

Standard FAA spin-recovery sequence — verify with POH before applying.
Ref: AC 61-67, AFH Ch 5

7700 / 7600 / 7500 — 7700 = General emergency · 7600 = Lost communications · 7500 = Hijack

Emergency transponder squawk codes.
Ref: AIM 6-2, §91.185

MAYDAY / PAN-PAN — MAYDAY = Distress (immediate danger) · PAN-PAN = Urgency (situation that requires assistance but is not immediately life-threatening)

International distress / urgency calls. Repeat three times on 121.5 or working frequency.
Ref: AIM 6-3

Weather

METAR / SPECI — Routine hourly aviation weather report / Special non-routine report

Surface aviation observation. SPECI issued when conditions change significantly.
Ref: AIM 7-1

TAF — Terminal Aerodrome Forecast

24- or 30-hour airport-specific forecast within ~5 SM.
Ref: AIM 7-1

AIRMET / SIGMET / Convective SIGMET — Airmen's Met Information / Significant Met Information / Convective Sig Met

AIRMET = light icing/turbulence/IFR conditions. SIGMET = severe turbulence/icing/dust/volcanic ash. Convective SIGMET = thunderstorms, hail ≥¾ in, tornadoes, lines of TS.
Ref: AIM 7-1-6

PIREP — Pilot Report

In-flight observation by a pilot — most current real-time data.
Ref: AIM 7-1-21

WX brief sources — 1800wxbrief, EFB (ForeFlight, Garmin Pilot), aviationweather.gov, FAA Leidos Flight Service

Standard self-brief sources accepted by FAA for §91.103 preflight action.
Ref: §91.103

Certificates

PIC / SIC — Pilot in Command / Second in Command

PIC = directly responsible for & final authority over the operation (§1.1).
Ref: §1.1, §61.51

ATP / CPL / PPL / SPL — Airline Transport Pilot / Commercial Pilot License / Private Pilot License / Sport Pilot License

Certificate hierarchy.
Ref: §61

CFI / CFII / MEI — Certified Flight Instructor / Instrument-Instructor / Multi-Engine Instructor

Flight instructor certificates and ratings (§61.183).
Ref: §61.183

DPE / FSDO / IACRA — Designated Pilot Examiner / Flight Standards District Office / Integrated Airman Certification & Rating Application

DPE administers practicals; FSDO is the FAA local office; IACRA is the online application portal.
Ref: FAA Order 8900

References

FAR / AIM — Federal Aviation Regulations / Aeronautical Information Manual

FAR = Title 14 CFR. AIM = procedures and information for the National Airspace System.
Ref: §14 CFR; AIM

PHAK / AFH / HFH / IFH / IPH / AIH / RMH — Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge / Airplane Flying Handbook / Helicopter Flying Handbook / Instrument Flying Handbook / Instrument Procedures Handbook / Aviation Instructor's Handbook / Risk Management Handbook

Core FAA training handbooks (FAA-H-8083 series).
Ref: FAA-H-8083 series

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ACS / PTS / TCO — Airman Certification Standards / Practical Test Standards (legacy) / Training Course Outline (Part 141)

ACS replaced PTS for most practical tests. TCO is the FAA-approved syllabus at a Part 141 school.
Ref: FAA-S-ACS series

POH / RFM / AFM / TCDS — Pilot's Operating Handbook / Rotorcraft Flight Manual / Airplane Flight Manual / Type Certificate Data Sheet

POH and AFM are FAA-approved aircraft-specific manuals; TCDS is the manufacturer data sheet.
Ref: §91.9

Documents

ARROW — Airworthiness, Registration, Radio station license (international), Operating limits / POH, Weight & balance

Documents required on board the aircraft. The Radio Station License is only required for international operations.
Ref: §91.9, §91.203, §91.21

AROW — Airworthiness, Registration, Operating limitations, Weight & balance

Some training schools teach AROW as the domestic-only subset of ARROW (no Radio Station License).
Ref: §91.9, §91.203

PIC documents — Photo ID, Pilot certificate, Medical certificate (or BasicMed eligibility documents)

What every pilot must have on their person to act as PIC.
Ref: §61.3

Endorsements

§61.31 Endorsements — (e) Complex (retractable + controllable prop + flaps), (f) High-performance (>200 hp), (g) High-altitude (FL250+ pressurized), (i) Tailwheel

Airplane-specific endorsements required to act as PIC of those aircraft.
Ref: §61.31

§61.183(i) Spin Endorsement — Required for initial Flight Instructor — Airplane applicants

Helicopter applicants are exempt. Logbook endorsement after stall awareness, spin entry, spins, and recovery procedures in a spin-approved airplane.
Ref: §61.183(i), AC 61-67

AC 61-65 — Advisory Circular — Endorsements language

Always copy the current AC 61-65 endorsement language verbatim.
Ref: AC 61-65

Equipment

A-TOMATO-FLAMES — Airspeed, Tach, Oil press, Manifold press, Altimeter, Temp gauge, Oil temp, Fuel gauge, Landing gear position, Anti-collision lights, Magnetic compass, ELT, Safety belts

Required day VFR equipment for an airplane.
Ref: §91.205(b)

FLAPS — Fuses (spare set), Landing light (if for hire), Anti-collision lights, Position lights, Source of electrical power

Additional equipment required for night VFR (added to A-TOMATO-FLAMES).
Ref: §91.205(c)

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GRABCARD — Generator/Alternator, Radios (2-way comm + nav), Altimeter (sensitive), Ball (slip/skid), Clock (sweep-second), Attitude indicator, Rate-of-turn indicator, DME (above FL240 if VOR required)

Additional equipment required for IFR flight (added to A-TOMATO-FLAMES + FLAPS for night IFR).
Ref: §91.205(d)

Helicopter Ops

4 Ps / 4 Ss — 4 Ps in confined-area (helicopter): Power, Path, Profile, Plan · 4 Ss recon: Size, Shape, Surface, Surroundings

Ops planning mnemonics for confined-area, pinnacle, and slope work.
Ref: HFH Ch 8

SFAR 73 — Special Federal Aviation Regulation 73 — Robinson R22 / R44 special training & currency

Awareness training, hours requirements, and 12-cal-mo recurrent for R22 and R44 PIC operations.
Ref: SFAR 73 (in Part 61)

Class A/B/C/D External Load — A: cargo on fixed line, not jettisonable; B: jettisonable, free of land/water; C: drag/contact; D: human external cargo

Part 133 external load classifications.
Ref: Part 133

Aerodynamics

AOA — Angle of Attack

Angle between the chord line and the relative wind. Critical AOA = stall.
Ref: PHAK Ch 5

CG / MAC — Center of Gravity / Mean Aerodynamic Chord

CG must remain within the published envelope. CG % MAC is common in transport-category specs.
Ref: PHAK Ch 10

Avionics

ADS-B Out / In — Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast Out (transmits position to ATC) / In (receives traffic and weather)

ADS-B Out is required in most controlled airspace per §91.225.
Ref: §91.225, AIM 4-5-7

Mode C / Mode S — Transponder altitude reporting (Mode C) / addressable digital (Mode S, supports ADS-B)

Mode C required in the 30-NM Mode C veil around Class B and other airspace per §91.215.
Ref: §91.215

Communications

CTAF / UNICOM — Common Traffic Advisory Frequency / Universal Communications (private radio service for airport advisories)

At non-towered airports — make self-announce calls on CTAF; UNICOM may be the same frequency.
Ref: AIM 4-1-9

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Light gun signals — Steady green / Flashing green / Steady red / Flashing red / Flashing white / Alternating red & green

Used during NORDO operations. Steady green = cleared (T/O or land); Flashing green = cleared to taxi or return; Steady red = stop / give way; Flashing red = unsafe (do not land) / taxi clear; Flashing white = return to start; Alt red & green = caution.
Ref: AIM 4-3-13

Currency

WINGS — FAA Pilot Proficiency Program

Completing one phase within 24 cal mo satisfies the §61.56 flight review requirement.
Ref: §61.56(e), faasafety.gov

IPC — Instrument Proficiency Check

Required after >12 cal mo without §61.57(c) currency. Conducted to ACS standards by an authorized instructor or examiner.
Ref: §61.57(d)

Operations

NOTAM — Notice to Air Missions

Time-critical aeronautical info. Categories include domestic, international, military, FDC, and SAA.
Ref: AIM 5-1-3

TFR — Temporary Flight Restriction

NOTAM-based airspace restriction (sports events, presidential, disaster, security).
Ref: §91.137-§91.145, AIM 3-5-3

Aerodynamics (Airplane)

P-factor / Torque / Slipstream / Precession — Four left-turning tendencies in a single-engine prop airplane

Most pronounced at high power / low airspeed (takeoff). Counter with right rudder.
Ref: PHAK Ch 5

Airspace

Class A/B/C/D/E/G — Airspace classes — Alpha (FL180-FL600 IFR only), Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo (controlled), Golf (uncontrolled)

Each class has separate VFR weather minimums, equipment, and clearance requirements.
Ref: AIM 3-2

Communications / IFR

NORDO / NOPT — No Radio (transmitter inop) / No Procedure Turn

NORDO is the loss of two-way comm. NoPT is the depicted exception on an approach plate.
Ref: §91.185, AIM 5-4-9

Emergency / IFR

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IIMC — Inadvertent Instrument Meteorological Conditions

VFR-only flight that enters IMC. Sequence: level wings on AI, climb to MEA/MSA, communicate, request vectors to VMC.
Ref: AIM 7-5-9

IFR (Helicopter)

PinS — Proceed VFR / Proceed Visually — Point-in-Space helicopter approach. Proceed VFR requires VFR weather. Proceed Visually keeps you IFR with charted visual references.

Heli-only IFR transitions from MAP to a heliport.
Ref: AIM 5-4-5

Inspections

AAV1ATE — Annual, ADs, VOR (30 days IFR), 100-hour (for hire / instruction), Altimeter / Pitot-static (24 cal mo IFR), Transponder (24 cal mo), ELT (12 cal mo & battery)

Required inspections on the aircraft. The '1' stands for the 100-hour (only required when used for hire or for instruction provided by the owner).
Ref: §91.409, §91.171, §91.411, §91.413, §91.207, §91.403

Performance

DA / PA — Density Altitude / Pressure Altitude

DA = PA corrected for non-standard temperature. High & hot & humid = degraded performance.
Ref: PHAK Ch 11

Pre-landing

GUMPS — Gas, Undercarriage, Mixture, Prop, Switches/Seatbelts

Pre-landing flow for complex airplanes; do twice (downwind and final).
Ref: AFH Ch 8

Pre-takeoff

CIGAR-TIPS — Controls, Instruments, Gas, Attitude (trim), Run-up, Throttle friction, Interior, Pre-takeoff brief, Switches

Pre-takeoff check flow.
Ref: AFH Ch 2

V-speeds (Helicopter)

Vauto — Helicopter — autorotation airspeed

Speed for minimum descent rate or maximum glide; specific to airframe. Verify in RFM.
Ref: HFH Ch 11; RFM

Weather / Comms

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ATIS / AWOS / ASOS — Automatic Terminal Information Service / Automated Weather Observing System / Automated Surface Observing System

Recorded airport weather and information broadcasts.
Ref: AIM 4-1-13, AIM 7-1-12