

009 Visual Flight Rules (Preparation for Flight)

Aim: To familiarise yourself with Visual Flight Rules.

Definitions

Visual flight rules (VFR) are a set of regulations which allow a pilot to operate an aircraft in weather conditions generally clear enough to allow the pilot to see where the aircraft is going. Specifically, the weather must be better than Basic VFR Weather Minimums, as specified in the National rules set out below. If the weather is worse than VFR minimums; pilots are required to use Instrument Flight Rules (**IFR**).

Some airspace, typically class A also requires you to operate under IFR only, regardless of the visibility.

Glider pilots in the UK have had (and still have) exemptions to operate in cloud outside of controlled airspace. These rules are currently being renegotiated with the introduction of new EASA licensing regulations due in (2012). The exemptions for glider pilots will probably be removed, and it will become an offence to break the Visual Flight Rules.

In any event glider pilots must not enter class “A”; it is IFR rules only. Glider pilots are unable to comply with all instructions from Air Traffic Controllers, and they are not normally Instrument rated.

Meteorological conditions that meet the minimum requirements for VFR flight are termed *visual meteorological conditions (VMC)*. If they are not met, the conditions are considered *instrument meteorological conditions (IMC)*, and a flight may only operate under IFR.

This is an extract from the CAA publication VFR guide 03:

Visual Flight Rules

The Visual Flight Rules (Rules 25 to 29 of the UK Rules of the Air Regulations 2007 refer) require an aircraft to be flown in accordance with the VMC minima appropriate to the classification of the airspace. Additionally, when flying in controlled airspace (except Class E) unless otherwise authorised by the ATC Unit, the commander of the aircraft must file a flight plan, obtain an ATC clearance, maintain a listening watch on the appropriate frequency and comply with any instructions given by the ATC Unit. Pilots are reminded that a response of “Stand by” from ATC is NOT a clearance and Controlled Airspace (CAS) should NOT be entered on such a command. VFR flight is not permitted in Class A Controlled Airspace.

Requirements for VFR flights

Weather minima for VFR flight within Controlled Airspace (Classes C to E Airspace).

(a) At and above FL 100--8 km flight visibility---1500m horizontally from cloud---1000ft vertically from cloud.

(b) Below FL 100---5 km flight visibility---1500m horizontally from cloud---1000ft vertically from cloud.

(c) At or below 3000ft---As in (b) above. For fixed wing aircraft operating at 140kt or less:---5 km flight visibility--- Clear of cloud and in sight of the surface.

There is no Class B Airspace in the UK FIR and Class C only exists above FL195. To accommodate VFR and military autonomous operations above FL 195 Temporary Reserved Areas (TRAs) have been introduced. TRAs are notified volumes of airspace within which ATS will be provided in accordance with UK Air Traffic Services Outside Controlled Airspace (ATSOCAS) rules.

Tips---take a look at the VFR guide below, it is a valuable training resource packed with good information and its free.

Further Reading

www.caa.co.uk/docs/64/VFR_Guide_03_09.pdf