



Visual Flight Rules (VFR)

What are Visual Flight Rules (VFR)?

Visual Flight Rules (VFR) is a method of flying commonly used by helicopters and light aircraft where the pilot uses visual reference to the ground or water to navigate their flight.

VFR aircraft are generally two to four seat aircraft with pilots undertaking flying training or recreational flying. This includes helicopters and small fixed-wing aircraft operated by private pilots.

Basic requirements for aircraft to fly under VFR include suitable weather and visibility conditions, as well as appropriate navigation and communication equipment.

How low can VFR aircraft fly?

VFR aircraft cannot fly below 1000ft (304.8m) over populated areas or public gathering spaces. They must also fly 1000ft over the highest feature or obstacle that is within a 600m radius of them (see **Figure 2**, right).

The same applies to helicopters, but they are constrained to a 300m radius. Minimum height requirements are generally higher at night-time.

There are some exceptions to the minimum height requirements such as during take-off or landing, while engaging in a missed approach, practicing emergency procedures, and when undertaking circuit training.

When VFR aircraft are operating at night they will have higher minimum height requirements, which would vary depending on the portion of airspace they are operating in.

More information about minimum height requirements, the VMC criteria, day and night periods, and other VFR rules can be found in the *Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Visual Flight Rules Guide*.

What airspace can VFR aircraft use?

In Australia, there are two major types of airspace: controlled and uncontrolled airspace. VFR aircraft can generally fly in both uncontrolled airspace (Class G airspace) and controlled airspace (Class C or D airspace). See **Figure 1** on the following page for the different classes of airspace in Australia.

Operations in controlled airspace require clearance from Air Traffic Control (ATC) and are subject to ATC workload and other traffic.

In uncontrolled airspace, VFR aircraft are permitted to fly without clearance from ATC.

However, they are still required to follow safety rules and communicate with each other to maintain safe separation distances, but they have more flexibility in choosing their routes and altitudes.

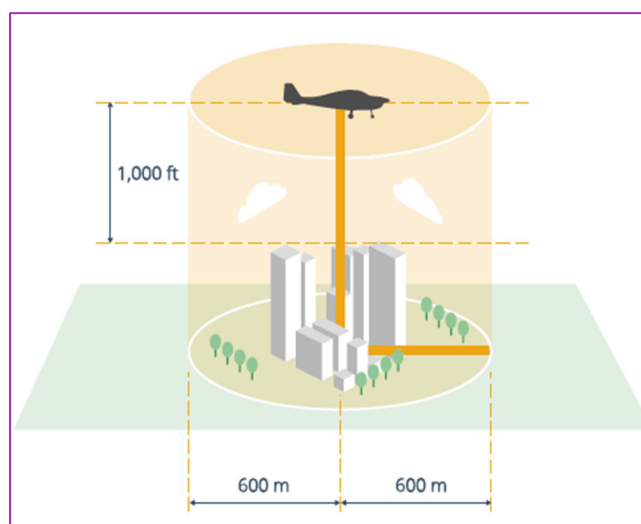


Figure 2: minimum height requirements for VFR aircraft (source: CASA's *Visual Flight Rules Guide*)

Can VFR aircraft fly in any weather conditions?

Pilots must operate VFR aircraft according to the Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) criteria for the aircraft and airspace that the pilot is intending to fly in.

The VMC criteria assesses flight visibility and distances from clouds to determine suitability for VFR flights.

VFR aircraft are not permitted to take-off in conditions where cloud cover and visibility fall below VMC standards.

Operations during day and night periods

There are often different rules and requirements for VFR aircraft that operate during the daytime and the night-time.

Night generally refers to a period when there is an absence of natural light, which commences roughly 24 minutes after sunset and lasts until the next day period commences. Day generally refers to the period where natural light can be seen, which commences roughly 24 minutes before sunrise. Pilots operating VFR aircraft have tools to assist them with calculating the night and day periods more mathematically and accurately for any given day.

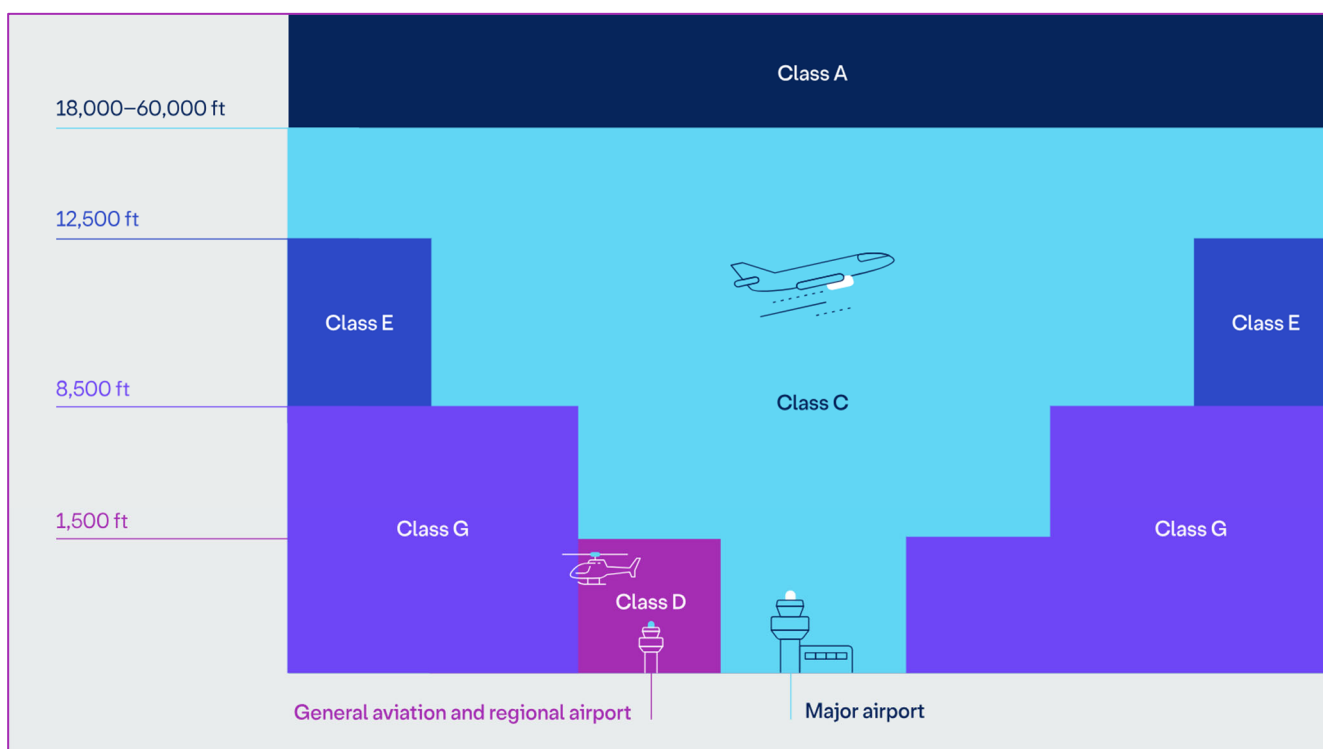


Figure 1: different classes of airspace in Australia

Airspace classification guide

Class A: This high-level enroute controlled airspace is used predominately by commercial and passenger jets. Only Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flights are permitted and they require an Air Traffic Control (ATC) clearance. All flights are provided with an ATC service and are separated from each other.

Class C: This is the controlled airspace surrounding major airports. Both IFR and VFR flights are permitted and must communicate with ATC. IFR aircraft are separated from both IFR and VFR aircraft, and VFR aircraft are provided traffic information on other VFR aircraft.

Class D: This is the controlled airspace that surrounds general aviation and regional airports equipped with a control tower. All flights require ATC clearance.

Class E: This mid-level enroute controlled airspace is open to both IFR and VFR aircraft. IFR flights are required to communicate with ATC and must request ATC clearance.

Class G: This airspace is uncontrolled. Both IFR and VFR aircraft are permitted and neither require ATC clearance.

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Questions or complaints about aircraft operations, please contact our Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS) at: <https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/aircraft-noise/about-making-a-complaint>



Do you need a translator?

You can contact the free [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\)](#) on **131 450** and ask them to call Airservices on **1300 301 120**

Bạn có cần một người phiên dịch không?

Bạn có thể liên hệ với Dịch vụ Biên phiên dịch (TIS) miễn phí theo số **131 450** và yêu cầu họ gọi cho nhóm gắn kết cộng đồng theo số **1300 301 120**

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您可以拨打 **131 450** 联系免费笔译和口译服务 (TIS)，并要求他们致电 **1300 301 120** 联系社区参与团队

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