

There are 4 different federal aviation regulations that pertain to FAA licenses:

1. § 61.19 Duration of pilot and instructor certificates
2. § 61.2 Exercise of Privilege
3. § 61.23 Medical certificates: Requirement and duration.
4. § 61.56 Flight Review
5. § 61.57 Recent Flight Experience : Pilot in command

I know it sounds like a lot of boring legalize to go through, but it's really not that bad. Let's take these one-by-one and then make a plan-of-action to get you back in the cockpit.

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The Regs:

1) § 61.19 Duration of Pilot Certificates ([link](#)):

Good news, according to § 61.19 your private pilot certificate (technically not a license) does not have an expiration date (as long as it was issued after July 1, 1945):

(c) Other pilot certificates. A pilot certificate (other than a student pilot certificate) issued under this part is issued without a specific expiration date.

However, there is a little catch near the end in paragraph (g):

*(g) Duration of pilot certificates. Except for a temporary certificate issued under §61.17 or a student pilot certificate issued under paragraph (b) of this section, the holder of a **paper pilot certificate** issued under this part may not exercise the privileges of that certificate after March 31, 2010.*

You see, the FAA is moving towards plastic pilot certificates. So, in our plan of action below, we'll want to make sure we cover the instructions for getting exchanging your paper certificate for a new plastic certificate.

2) § 61.2 Exercise of Privilege ([link](#))

The first paragraph (a) hopefully doesn't apply to you but take a look at paragraph (b):

(b) Currency. No person may:

(1) Exercise privileges of an airman certificate, rating, endorsement, or authorization issued under this part unless that person meets the appropriate airman and medical recency requirements of this part, specific to the operation or activity.

This regulation is saying that you need to be "recent", both medically and as an airman. So let's look at the medical requirements and then the airman requirements.

3. § 61.23 Medical certificates: Requirement and duration ([link](#)).

A private pilot certificate requires a third-class medical certificate. If you are over 40, then your medical certificate expires on the last day after the 24th calendar month when it was issued.

You'll notice that in the plan-of-action below, getting your new medical is the first step. You'll want to make sure that there hasn't been any medical or health activity in the past 20 years that

would preclude you from flying again. Once you get a third class medical, now we can talk about getting you current as an airman.

4. § 61.56 Flight Review ([link](#))

This reg is really the meat of the matter. Besides medically, complying with this regulation is what has stopped you from being a active pilot. This regulation requires that:

(c) ... no person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft unless, since the beginning of the 24th calendar month before the month in which that pilot acts as pilot in command, that person has—

(1) Accomplished a flight review given in an aircraft for which that pilot is rated by an authorized instructor...

A flight review consists of at least 1 hour of ground and flight training. Your instructor is required to cover at minimum general and part 91 operating rules in addition to anything else that might be applicable. One of the areas that I'm sure your flight instructor will spend quite a bit of time with is airspace since there have been many changes to the airspace system since you stopped flying.

Your flight review will also include at least 1 hour of flight training, but again, be prepared for more. Your instructor will go over maneuvers and procedures that are applicable for your certificate level. Your instructor is required to make sure that you can safely exercise the privileges of your certificate.

To help get you ready for the Flight Review, AOPA has produced a guide called the "[Pilot's Guide to the Flight Review](#)" which you can download for free. It has a lot of very helpful information to help you get ready for your BFR.

5) § 61.57 Recent Flight Experience : Pilot in command ([link](#))

The last check box we want to cover is the requirement for recent flight experience. Before you can carry passengers as pilot-in-command you'll need to accomplish 3 takeoffs and landings within the preceding 90 days. If you are planning as on flying as PIC at night with passengers, those takeoffs and landings must be performed at night (duh) and to a full stop. I would recommend that you ask your flight instructor who will be conducting your flight review to also make sure that you complete the requirements of this regulation as well.

Plan of Action if conditions above are not met:

Ok, so now that we have covered all the boring (but required) legalize, here is a suggested plan for getting you back in the cockpit:

1) Call an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) [Dr Murray FAL or Dr Buchner] and schedule an appointment for obtaining your FAA medical certificate. If the scheduler asks, you're looking for a 3rd class medical. Both the [FAA](#) and [AOPA](#) have a handy "[Find a AME](#)" tool that you can use to find an Aviation Medical Examiner in your area.

2) Once you have a current medical certificate in hand. Call a CFI (Christoph 082 372 3641) and schedule a biennial flight review (BFR). If you're looking for a CFI, again [AOPA has a search tool for that too](#). You might already have a CFI, flight school or FBO that you already comfortable

using. AOPA also has produced a guide call the “[Pilot’s Guide to the Flight Review](#)” which you can download.

3) Apply for your new plastic certificate. You can do so directly on the FAA website or via snail mail. [The instructions are listed here.](#)