

UNITED
VIRTUAL



Flight Standards & Training

**Aircrew
Flight Review
& Rating Checkride
Procedures**

VERSION 6.0

Aircrew Flight Review and Rating Checkride Procedures (AFRP)

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Fm: President & CEO
To: All United Virtual Airlines Pilots

Subj: Aircrew Flight Review & Rating Checkride Procedures

1. Use of this Guide is restricted to UVA Operations.
2. All of us at United Virtual Airlines (UVA) are dedicated to enhancing the enjoyment of flight simulation enthusiasts by providing a realistic, hi-fidelity simulation of airline operations, while enjoying the social aspects of a Virtual Airlines community.
3. This publication outlines the philosophy and details for the flight reviews, as well as the rating checkrides. This release builds on, but also significantly amends the procedures outlined in the previous (Aircrew Checkride Procedures) ACP documents.
4. As always, the goal is to promote good general airmanship, in line with real world standards. We now provide access to detailed Flight Reviews of your flying. There is also an optional Rating System at UVA, where you can develop truly in-depth understanding of flight procedures and techniques. As a guiding framework we provide a full fledged Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures (ASOP) and Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures Supplement (ASOPS) together with abundant and detailed "How to Fly" training resources.
5. Pilots are cautioned, that the guidelines for preparation for a Flight Review or Rating Checkride are incomplete without also consulting the companion document, the Aircrew Flight Review and Rating Checkride Supplement (AFRPS). The AFRPS has an effective date and an expiry date, ensure that you are using the correct AFRPS for your ride.
6. Any pilot with questions about flight reviews, ratings, checkrides, procedures, or standards criteria, should contact their Regional Manager, or the Chief Pilot.
7. Anyone with recommended changes to this publication should contact the President or the Chief Pilot.



Orest Skrypuch
President & CEO, UAL001
United Virtual Airlines

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Introduction

In this introduction you will find an overview of both Flight Reviews and Rating Checkrides, together with any details that are common to both. The balance of this document is split into two complementary parts. Part One introduces the procedures for flying a Flight Review (FR), while Part Two outlines those for a Rating Checkride (RC).

These are two very different procedures, with different purposes.

In addition to this document, consult the Aircrew Flight Review and Rating Checkride Procedures Supplement (AFRPS). The AFRPS has a *effective* date and an *expiry* date, ensure that you are using the applicable AFRPS for your ride.

Flight Review

A Flight Review largely consists of a formalized tutorial. You will be provided with a confidential and detailed analysis of your flight by our experienced checkpilots. They will specifically outline what you might do to improve your flying, and how to get there. It is our intention that you will utilize this analysis to improve your flying skills.

A Flight Review is not a *checkride* in the sense that it requires of you a certain passing grade in order to continue with your career.

A Flight Review is a grand opportunity for you to learn something more about flying, and in particular about your own flying.

The Flight Review outlined in the AFRPS walks you through a detailed short flight, based on procedures typically used by airline operations. The feedback that you will receive from the UVA checkpilots is unique in the virtual airline world.

On completing and submitting a satisfactory Flight Review "A" (FR-A), and having your flight assessed by a checkpilot, you will be rewarded with a permanent United Virtual Pilot-ID (PID). You will have taken your first step in launching your career at UVA, and you will then be authorized to crew Narrow Body Jetliners.

Other optional Flight Reviews may become available to our pilots. With a completed FR-A, you can then choose to advance to larger aircraft by seniority, obtained by accruing flight hours.

Rating Checkride

Like a Flight Review, a Rating Checkride's primary purpose is also education. But a Rating Checkride (RC) is different in that it is far more demanding – requiring aircrews to meet stringent maneuver performance standards, preflight performance calculations and adherence to strict format for checkride flight submission. UVA's rating checkride standards of performance are based on the FAA's practical test standards for type ratings, modified for use on a desktop simulator.



Before being allowed to fly an RC, you may be asked to submit a written test on general knowledge and emergency procedures. If you meet the standard, you will then be allowed to proceed to the full Rating Checkride.

You will need to carefully study the documents referenced, and ensure that your flight is not only flown respecting our Standard Operating procedures, but also as dictated by the Rating Checkride outline.

On flying and submitting your RC, you will also receive a detailed review of your flying, together with a grade outlining how you are flying. If you meet the standard, you will achieve a pass, and be accorded with a new Rating. That will allow you to fly aircraft included in that rating.

Having obtained a rating for an aircraft type, you can fly that aircraft regardless of how many flight hours you may have accrued at UVA.

Carrying through and obtaining a rating is a major achievement, and one you should be proud of. You will have taken your flying to a new level.

The Ride

Neusinger Flight Data Recorder (NFDR) - *DEPRECATED*

The manner of recording your flight for submissions has changed. Please review the current AFRPS document for details.

This document will be updated shortly to reflect this as well.

Your Checkpilot

After you post your message and the file submission is complete, if all is in order with your post as per the Checkride Posting guidelines (AFRPS), a checkpilot will be assigned for your ride. At times there are more rides than checkpilots available, that will necessitate a wait for when one is free.

Very occasionally we are so overloaded that we have to declare a checkride "Hold." When we do, it will be announced in the Ride Submission section. You may not submit rides while there is a gate hold in place, any such ride submissions will be removed. You are free to fly a ride during this time, but do not submit it until the gate hold is removed. All rides that have already been posted at the time the gate hold was imposed, will be assigned and graded.

Checkpilots can pick rides themselves if they have extra time. Any rides not picked by a checkpilot, will have one assigned – assignments are generally on the same day of each



week. Usually the name and email address of your checkpilot will be posted in the thread, he will be your first point of contact.

Rides are not assigned or chosen on a precisely first come, first served basis.

The checkpilot will usually post to your thread as a reply, and may give an indication of when you might expect your ride to be reviewed. This is often within a few days, but might be a week or even longer if they are busy. Occasionally the rides need to be reassigned, and these will necessarily take more time to complete.

Some rides may take longer to be reviewed than others. Each is performed by a different checkpilot with a different schedule and different RW commitments. Again, do not expect a precise first come, first served process.

Once your ride post is complete and approved, then if you do not hear anything about your ride within seven days of a checkpilot assignment, please email the checkpilot directly. If his email was not noted or he does not reply, then post a reply in your thread requesting the status.

Please do not post messages asking why your checkride is not done before this time, it needlessly wastes our time replying.

Typically, once a ride post is complete and properly posted, the ride assignment, the report, and the grading and promotion if applicable, should be complete within two weeks. It is usually sooner rather than later, but of course sometimes it may take longer if circumstances dictate.

Our checkpilots may be highly paid professionals, but they are not on UVA's payroll! The volunteer staff here thanks you for your patience.

For questions on your ride, please append a reply to your ride posting, or contact your assigned checkpilot directly by email.

In the case of a Rating Checkride, should your ride need to be reflight, often it will be reassigned to the same checkpilot. If you are reflighting a checkride you should so indicate in the submission.

If you need to reflight a checkride, you may not resubmit for at least two weeks. You need to spend some time to learn and practice, follow the tips given in the report. For some hints on reflighting a checkride see the *Flying or ReFlying a Checkride* section below.



Part One – Flight Review

Our goal, is to assist you with improving your flying skills.

We understand that the experience level of new UVA members will vary widely, right from a beginning sim-pilot, to highly experienced real world aircrews. We strive to cater to everyone.

Helping you become more familiar with airline ops and large aircraft flying is largely the purpose of the Flight Review. Some will need that introduction more than others, but all will probably benefit. It is meant to be fun and educational.

On completion of the first Flight Review, the FR-A, you will be accorded permanent pilot status, and receive a new lower numbered Pilot ID. You will then be able to proceed in your career and gain access larger aircraft, by either the accumulation of hours, or by flying the optional rating checkrides.

Requirements Before Taking a Flight Review

Hours

Pilots are reminded that they must be hours eligible, before they can take a Flight Review. The specifics of the hours required is outlined in the AFRPS.

Preparation

The preparation for a Flight Review is not as rigorous as what you would need to carry out for a Rating Checkride (see next section), but you will get out of the Flight Review, what you put into it. It is our hope that you will capitalize on this unique opportunity.

The step by step directions in the AFRPS will take you through the ride, but you would be well served by reviewing the following.

1. The UVA Flight Training Primer, most of the answers, in one place!
2. The ASOPS: look to the Flight Primer when you are learning, but for a quick reference as to the profiles we will teach you to fly, see the Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures Supplement.
3. The NFDR (flight recorder) documentation, included in the AFRPS, in an Appendix.
4. The other general resources available to you include the following.
 - The new **UVA Wiki** is coming on line now, it will eventually replace most of the informational resources, now presented as separate documents.
 - The **Let's Have a Look** section. All visually based. Teaching pictures, videos and even sample flights flown by experienced pilots and recorded with the NFDR. Now you can see exactly what you should be doing while you are out there.



- The **Training Resource QuickList (TRQ)**. This document keys by subject most of the resources we have available for you. Great for when you want to quickly find something on a specific topic.
- Also be sure to grab one of the UVA generic aircraft checklists. You may find it useful even if you normally use other checklists. For sure it will help you avoid some common errors we see on rides.

Some practice will go a long way to making the Flight Review an even more rewarding experience.

Flight Review Philosophy

Purpose

The primary purpose of all rides is to facilitate education and improve flying by providing detailed feedback.

Principles

Rides, regardless of level, are evaluated to the same set of standards. However with a Flight Review, there is little specific achievement expected. It is primarily a tutorial experience.

Constituent Errors

Rides will have specific defined aspects that the pilot must include/complete, these are the constituent elements, and are explicitly outlined in the AFRPS. For example the flight route, time of departure or weather settings. If you are required to fly to JFK, but instead you make a perfect landing at LGA, you will be required to fly the ride over. Review the ride description in the AFRPS carefully, to ensure you catch all of these items.

General Errors

Your flying will be compared to established standards. Where you fall short, we will note how using descriptive terms. We break up these errors into catastrophic, critical and technical.

Catastrophic Error

Something that was imminent, or has caused damage, to the aircraft or passengers or others is called a catastrophic error. Although not all inclusive, examples of catastrophic errors are missing the runway, "landing" at a descent vertical speed of more than 500 fpm, landing much too fast and bouncing a few times on the runway, stalling or almost stalling on takeoff or during climb, or striking the ground or other objects with some part of the aircraft. If committing a catastrophic error, especially if multiple such errors appear, you may be asked to refly the Flight Review.

Critical Error

Anything that could seriously endanger the aircraft or passengers is a critical error. Examples would include an unstable approach, violating minimum IFR altitudes, or flying



below minimum flap maneuvering speed.

Technical Error

The rest of the errors, are labeled technical errors. This is certainly the largest group. You will see in your report all of the observations we have made, comments and errors.

Results

You will receive your private Flight Review analysis by direct email.



Part Two – Rating Checkride

Our goal, as always, is to get you flying just a little better. If you don't improve, then we have failed.

To that end, in assessing your checkride we will be looking for good general airmanship, and will provide in depth feedback to help you along.

Sometimes we ask that you re-fly the checkride, or give you a specific extra exercise, we do this to ensure that by the end of the process, you will indeed have improved. You should consider this a further opportunity to learn and improve.

When you successfully complete a Rating Checkride, you will move up in rank, and gain access to larger aircraft. This is one of two ways that you can advance.

Requirements Before Taking a Rating Checkride

Training Check Review (TCR)

At the time of the release of this document, there are no TCRs implemented, but this is expected to change.

Before flying a checkride you may be required to pass a Training Check Review. This is a short written examination generated randomly from a question bank. The examination is open book. There is no limit to the number of times you may retake the exam, but you are limited in how often.

TCRs will draw on readily available information for their questions, and will be a more direct test of the pilot's knowledge of aviation and regulations. The resources referenced will be outlined in the test package.

Further specifics on the TCR, when and whether one is required, as well as the mechanics on how to sit the exam, are in the companion Aircrew Flight Review & Rating Checkride Procedures Supplement (AFRPS) document.

Hours

There are *no hours requirements* for flying the Rating Checkrides. When you have the other prerequisites, you can fly and submit a ride.

Preparation

You must carefully read through this document, before you attempt to fly your checkride. Be sure to *also* thoroughly read the following.

1. The companion Aircrew Flight Review and Rating Checkride Procedures (AFRPS) document, and ensure that you are referencing the AFRPS that is current – check the effective & expiry date. The AFRPS contains all the specifics of the checkrides for each level, and changes from time to time.



2. The NFDR (flight recorder) documentation, included in the AFRPS, in an Appendix.
3. The thread in the Checkride Submission Forum "[Notes on Checkrides](#)". You will always find the most current Checkride information posted there. There may indeed be critical updates there, that you need to know about.
4. The UVA Flight Training Primer, most of the answers, all in one place!
5. The ASOPS: look to the Flight Primer when you are learning, but for a quick reference as to the profiles we expect you to fly, see the Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures Supplement
6. And something that you truly cannot be without, the UVA Flight Planning & Dispatch Tool (FPD v2.5). Gives you fuel, weights & VSPEEDS, and now prints out a Dispatch Release. It will make planning this aspect of your checkride a snap, and really you should use it (or something equivalent) for every flight. The FPD functionality is now incorporated in the Pilot Center reservation system, but be sure to download the full toolkit and read through the documentation to fully understand how these numbers all work.
7. Proper use of VSPEEDS (V1, Vr, V2 & Vref and Vref corrected) is expected for all Rating Checkrides. The Planner documentation fully explains what these speeds mean, how to use them, and the Planner calculates these for you with a few keystrokes.
8. The Checkride Flight Reports are standardized, and you will receive a report very similar to the format illustrated in Appendix C of the AFRPS. Also included in that sample Report Card are notations for most items, indicating what we are expecting to see.
9. The other general resources available to you include the following.
 - The new **UVA Wiki** is coming on line now, it will eventually replace most of the informational resources, now presented as separate documents.
 - The **Let's Have a Look** section. All visually based. Teaching pictures, videos and even sample flights flown by experienced pilots and recorded with the NFDR. Now you can see exactly what you should be doing while you are out there.
 - The Training Resource QuickList (TRQ). This document keys by subject most of the resources we have available for you. Great for when you want to quickly find something on a specific topic.
 - The sticky messages in the key [Training Reference Section](#)
 - Also start to review the voluminous messages in the [Flight Standards & Training Department](#) sections.
 - The rest of the materials on the Training Department section of our website, especially the transcripts of the outstanding training sessions put on by Real World ATP's
 - Also be sure to grab one of the UVA Generic checklists. You may find it useful even if you normally use other checklists. For sure it will help you avoid some common errors we see on rides.



Then, practice, practice, practice! All of the above resources will help direct you.

If you do all that, the rating checkrides will be a breeze. But, if you don't spend the time in reading the documentation & preparing before the ride, then you are unlikely to succeed.

If you are re-flying a rating checkride, unless your checkpilot specifically indicates otherwise, we expect a minimum of two weeks (14 days) between the issuing of a checkride report and a re-flying a checkride. That gives you time to study the report and to practice and hone your new skills.

For hints on an approach to re-flying a checkride, see the Flying or Re-flying a Checkride section below.

Rating Checkride Philosophy & Grading

Purpose

The primary purpose of checkrides is to facilitate education and improve flying. They are not meant to be regulatory, or onerous, there is no danger of you losing your job! We hope that you will find them a positive experience. Certainly, the majority of our pilots that have journeyed through the program before you, echo that it was very educational and valuable.

Principles

Checkrides, regardless of level, are evaluated to the same set of standards. As you progress through the ratings fewer errors will be tolerated.

We use the principle of progressively increasing difficulty as we go through the Levels. Now, in real life, flying an RJ around with 50 passengers is just as serious as flying a 747, but for our purposes we apply significant leeway in the entry-level stages. Higher Levels take more skill and facility to succeed at. We expect you to embody and learn the lessons early on, and apply these skills with continually greater finesse as you proceed.

Checkpilots work from guidelines, but there are always gray areas where they have to use discretion. They sometimes consult on a checkride with their colleagues. Also, checkride reports are always circulated within the department, to facilitate quality control and to help ensure a uniform approach.

Constituent Errors

Checkrides will have specific defined aspects that the pilot must include/complete, these are the constituent elements, and are explicitly outlined in the ACPS. For example the flight route, time of departure, weather settings, or when the autopilot is allowed for use. If you are required to fly to JFK, but instead make a perfect landing at LGA, you will be required to fly the checkride over. If you do not use a valid route, you will have to fly it again. Similarly if you are not to engage the autopilot until 5000ft, and you engage it at 1000ft, this will also require a re-fly. Review the checkride description in the ACPS carefully, to ensure you catch all of these items.



General Errors

Each checkride description outlines the expectations for the ride. Where you fall short, we will note how using descriptive terms. We break up these errors into catastrophic, critical and technical.

Catastrophic Error

Something that was imminent, or has caused damage, to the aircraft or passengers or others is called a catastrophic error. Although not all inclusive, examples of catastrophic errors are missing the runway, "landing" at a descent vertical speed of more than 500 fpm, landing much too fast and bouncing a few times on the runway, stalling or almost stalling on takeoff or during climb, or striking the tarmac or other objects with some part of the aircraft. A catastrophic error, on any rating checkride, will always result in the need for further study, practice and a resubmission.

Critical Error

Anything that could seriously endanger the aircraft or passengers is a critical error. Examples would include an unstable approach, violating minimum IFR altitudes, a non-emergency landing with less than FAR required reserve fuel (a planning error), or flying below minimum flap maneuvering speed. Critical errors become important as soon as you start to progress in your career.

Technical Error

The rest of the errors, are labeled technical errors. This is certainly the largest group, and only becomes important at the higher Levels. To succeed at the highest Levels, you are allowed only a minimum of technical errors.

You will see in your report all of the observations we have made, comments and errors. Even though a certain error may not have held you back at a lower Level, you need to correct this. Not only will this get you flying correctly, but it is likely to become an issue in the future, at higher Level checkrides.

Results

You will receive by directly by email a private analysis of your checkride, and a grade. The exact format of the report for formal checkrides is duplicated in ACPS Appendix C.

The grade will be one of:

"Rating Checkride Above Standard - Passed With Honors"

"Rating Checkride At Standard – Passed"

"Rating Checkride Below Standard - Repeat Required"

Pilots with *Rating Checkride Above Standard* demonstrated above average performance in virtually all aspects. This is seldom seen, and something to shoot for!

If the checkride is graded as *Below Standard* your first time (or even a second or third time), take heart, especially at a senior level you are by no means alone. Just think of it as an opportunity to learn something new! The real purpose of checkrides is to motivate you to continually improve your flying skills.

If your checkride is below standard you will need to repeat the checkride, you will get specific suggestions on what to do differently. You may also be given a special



assignment that will help develop and test a specific area for improvement.

We are going to do everything we can to get you to fly even better, and to help you succeed!

Other Notes

Flying or Reflying a Checkride, General Tips

Hopefully you are reading this before actually flying your checkride. If you have been asked to refly the checkride, the below goes doubly for you.

Reflying

It is not at all uncommon to be requested to repeat a checkride, especially at higher Levels. If you have been asked to refly a checkride what you need to do, is not get yourself down about it. Checkrides are all about learning something new, you now have yet another opportunity to do this.

If you are reflighting a checkride, check that the AFRPS release you based your ride on is still valid at the time that you plan to resubmit it. If there is a new AFRPS release then you must use the equivalent checkride as outlined in the new release AFRPS for your submission. Not doing so, will mean an automatic rejection of your submission.

If you are reflighting the checkride, here is an extra step to do. You need to actually view the flight you submitted for your checkride, with the same recorder you used to record it. As you watch it, have the checkride report that your checkpilot put together, and review each point that he makes. This was a report that was custom put together for your ride. Ensure that you understand the points he is trying to make. If you don't, then ask for more details or an explanation. The checkpilot will no doubt be happy to oblige. If you don't understand some technical issues, also feel free to post questions in the Training & Checkrides section.

If you are reflighting the ride, sometimes you might be sent a sample flight by the checkpilot, with a takeoff and landing. View it! That is what you want to emulate. The Let's Have a Look forum section has many recorded example flights for review as well.

Flying or ReFlying

Whether flying for the first time, or reflighting a checkride, the next thing to do is to review the Preparation section (again). It lists all the spots you can go to gather information. Even if you exhaustively read everything, it wouldn't likely take you more than a few hours. The key items to concentrate on are the UVA Flight Primer, and the ASOPS.

Once you have read the documents you will want to practice our procedures. The very best way to practice with any aircraft, is to fly extended practice patterns. Have a look at the Pattern Practice page in the Primer, and the sticky message Pattern Practice is Good. *The Approach* transcript also steps you through this nicely, although it doesn't cover the takeoff.

Now, here is the trick. Record your pattern practice, and play it back, rewind, fast-forward, slow motion, pause it, change views, all with a critical eye. The NFD is a fantastic tool not only for the checkpilot, but for you too. From your reading you are



getting an idea of what you should be seeing, ensure that you are actually executing this. DO NOT bother (re)flying the checkride right away, even as a practice, until you are solid in your practice patterns. That may take a while, or it might not.

So, #1 gather the information, #2 execute/practice the techniques, #3 review and see if you got it right, then loop back to #1 or #2 again, as required.

Once you think you are ready, give the checkride a try – but don't actually submit it – instead review it yourself! Do you think it makes the grade? If not, keep practicing, if you think it meets the mark then send it along.

If re-flying the checkride, do not resubmit checkrides in rapid fire hoping to get the dart closer by luck. Apply yourself, improve your flying, then submit the re-fly when you really are ready.

Unless your checkpilot specifically indicates otherwise, we expect a minimum of two weeks (14 days), and more typically longer, between the issuing of a checkride report, and a re-fly and resubmit of a checkride.

Time and Weather

When there is a time specified to fly a checkride, then you need to have that time set in FS. That can be achieved by:

1. Flying it actually at that real time (hard to do with our personal schedules I expect), or
2. Just setting the FS time to match the time required for the Checkride.

If there is no requirement in the AFRPS for specific weather, you may fly with weather cleared, you may fly with real time weather, you may fly with archived weather, you may even fly with imaginary weather – what you do in this regard will have no bearing on the grading. However there are two stipulations:

1. The weather you experience in FS must meet the minimums required for your takeoff & landing.
2. You need to specify in the checkride submission what that weather was during your checkride. If a METAR is unavailable, such as when setting weather in MSFS, then at a minimum provide the ATIS at the departure and arrival airports. METAR format for the weather note is strongly preferred, even if the METAR string is partial or incomplete.

Where your FS time is not actual real time, and you are using real time weather, there will obviously be a disconnect. However, this is not contrary to the checkride documentation, and perfectly legal to do. It may be preferred to try to get these matched up, but that is completely optional. Some folks may not even have the software to be able to do that even if they wanted to.

However, to avoid any confusion on the part of the checkride staff, it is recommended noting why the METAR time does not match the time of your flight your submission. This can arise for a number of reasons, given the foregoing discussion.

Also note that for some checkrides there may be certain weather and/or time requirements, double check the AFRPS.



Air Traffic Control (ATC)

Unfortunately, all ATC is not created equally in the flight simulator world and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these options is important to safe flying. The list below outlines the major choices. As PIC, it is important to understand that you will be held accountable for the conduct of your flight. Certainly one element is the routing of the flight. If you accept the directions and instructions of "poor" quality ATC, your checkride grade will have to negatively reflect that.

VATSIM

VATSIM is without question the best ATC available to the community. It models real world ATC including departure and arrival procedures, obstacle avoidance and more. That is not to say that it is not without its downside. Centers aren't always manned, not all pilots have access to a good internet connection and controller's experience levels vary just like ours. It is important to remember, just as in the real world, that you must be double checking the controller's work and clarifying anything that you think may be contrary to aircraft safety.

With all that said, when you get a good group of controllers together manning a full ARTCC center, it is one heck of an experience, and provides the very best scenario for flying a successful checkride flight.

MSFS Default ATC

The weakest ATC of the bunch. Most would agree that no ATC at all is better. MSFS ATC is ignorant of SIDs, STARs, normal airport runway usage and obstacle/terrain avoidance. The first three points could be overlooked, as their vectors do get you to the runway and they generally point you into the wind. However, the complete ignorance of terrain avoidance is a problem. MSFS ATC's tendency to violate safe terrain clearance altitudes, and worse yet to fly you into mountains requires a very skeptical view of descent and approach instructions. On a checkride you are certainly responsible for proper terrain avoidance – when using MSFS Default ATC consider yourself pretty much on your own.

Radar Contact

This is a step up from Default ATC, but users will vary in their view as to how big a step up it is. It is also important to point out that it requires proper setup beyond what many users are aware of. Without proper adjustment of minimum altitudes and other factors, it can leave you in the same boat as Default ATC.

For those who are proficient to the task and do take the time to set it up, it really is a big step up. It can be a good alternative, if you are unable to use VATSIM. However, blanket statements indicating that RC is safe ATC are problematic, as so much depends on proper configuration.

Minimum IFR Altitude

As your flight progresses, you are obligated to fly above a large variety of invisible planes, which guarantee terrain and obstacle avoidance as well as navigational beacon and ATC radio reception. These start as you leave the runway, navigate the departure (see the SID), fly enroute (navigational charts: MEA/MOCA/AMA), and then on the descent (STAR) and finally on the runway approach (IAP). Each phase carries with it a number of minimum IFR altitudes for specific segments that you must remain above.



You will find one such minimum altitude, the MSA, as a circle graphic on instrument approach procedure (IAP) plates. Seldom on a real world IFR flight would you be concerned with the MSA. The exceptions being if you were in a non-radar environment, or for communications failure. That said, the MSA is still something to keep an eye on to double check ATC instructions.

Unfortunately in our simulated world you will often be without ATC, or at least without reliable ATC, even on an IFR flight in controlled airspace. Unless you are lucky enough to have a direct feeder route joining the enroute with the instrument approach phases, in the absence of good quality ATC you will need to fall back on the terrain protection planning that MSA altitudes provide you. Some checkride setups may help by providing you with specific directions to help bridge this awkward situation. If there are such directions, then be sure you execute them.

ATC has available to them (only seen on VATSIM) Minimum Vectoring Altitudes (MVA). These allow for "more room" and hence flexibility, along specific tracks. But you, as a pilot, do not have access to these.

Without reliable ATC, to get you safely down to the ground (at a minimum), you need to respect the MEA along the airways, then respect the MSA until joining the Instrument Approach Procedure entry point (Initial Approach Fix or IAF). Once past the IAF, and on the published approach procedure, you will refer to the charted approach minimums. You need to stay above the Final Approach Fix (FAF) altitude until you pass it, and then finally you descend to land.

Respecting the minimums, does not necessarily mean flying at the minimum, you just need to be above them. But, as you get closer to landing, these minimums can become the altitude you should be flying at, it depends a great deal on the type of approach. Now, if you have reliable ATC, you may actually be cleared to below these, down to the controller only available minimum vectoring altitudes (MVA).

On a checkride, if you are vectoring yourself, you need to be very purposeful in maintaining a safe altitude, including respecting the MSA if there is no other route for transitioning from the enroute/descent environment to the instrument approach.

The Final Approach

Some checkride segments may specify otherwise, please read the AFRPS documentation carefully, but unless specifically stated otherwise consider the following as directive.

For checkrides autolands are prohibited. Therefore you will always have a visual segment during the approach & landing. As according to the ASOPS, this will restrict your flying to weather conditions that are no worse than Category I for precision approaches, that is a visibility (RVR) of 2400ft with a decision height (DH) of 200ft. If flying a non-precision approach, then of course the conditions must be even better.

Unless otherwise specified, you are free to fly your checkride in whatever weather you like, actual, archived, or custom. *But, regardless of the actual weather*, if not otherwise specified checkride landings are to be flown with instrument approach procedures (IAP), generally an ILS approach down to the decision altitude (DA), typically 200ft above the runway. You then switch to "heads up" visual flight and land.

Where weather minimums allow, and when available for the landing runway, non-precision instrument approaches such as RNAVLDA, LOC or VOR/DME are permitted as well. Similarly you will be expected to fly on instruments down to the minimum descent



altitude (MDA), and then switch to “heads up” visual flight and land.

While on the approach we expect you to track the instrument guidance system you are using, to the standards specified in the ASOPS. This is not to suggest that you should wear virtual foggles, or otherwise obstruct your view of the outside environment before this time, but simply that we expect your aircraft to track a path consistent with the instrument approach you are flying.

Once you start the visual segment, instrument guidance (VOR or localizer & glideslope) becomes supplementary rather than primary, you are then principally guided by the view out the window.

But no matter what segment of the approach, including during the visual segment, you need to rely on and crosscheck all resources as available, to ensure that you are flying a correct and safe profile. For more information on weather minimums for approaches see the ASOPS.

