

PRIVATE PILOT GROUND SCHOOL

MODULE 1-13 — AIRSPACE PREVIEW

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FACTS TO REMEMBER

KNOW THESE COLD

- U.S. airspace comes in six classes, A through G (there is no F in the U.S.), plus special use areas — every point in the sky is in exactly one class.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; AIM 3-1-1

- The alphabet runs from most controlled to least: A is the most restrictive, G is uncontrolled.

Source: PHAK ch. 15

- Class A is the high-altitude en route structure from 18,000 ft MSL to FL600, IFR only — it is not drawn on the sectional because it is everywhere above 18,000.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; AIM 3-2-2

- Class B surrounds the nation's busiest airports, shaped like an upside-down wedding cake, drawn with solid blue lines on the sectional.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; sectional legend

- Class C surrounds busy airports with radar approach control, drawn with solid magenta lines.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; sectional legend

- Class D surrounds smaller airports with an operating control tower, drawn with a dashed blue line, its ceiling printed in a dashed blue box.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; AIM 3-2-5

- Class D is tied to the tower's operating hours: when a part-time tower closes, the airspace becomes E or G per the Chart Supplement.

Source: AIM 3-2-5; Chart Supplement

- Salinas is Class D while the tower operates; when the tower is closed it is Class G at the surface with Class E starting at 700 ft AGL (verified against JO 7400.11, 2026-08-18).

Source: JO 7400.11

- Class E is controlled airspace that isn't A, B, C, or D — most of the map. The magenta vignette (faded band) means E starts at 700 ft AGL inside it; elsewhere E typically starts at 1,200 ft AGL.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; sectional legend

- Class G is the uncontrolled leftover between the surface and the overlying Class E floor — ATC issues no clearances there.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; AIM 3-3-1

- "Controlled" means ATC services and IFR separation exist there — it does not mean VFR aircraft need permission everywhere; what each class demands of a VFR pilot is Phase 2 material.

Source: PHAK ch. 15

- Special use airspace exists and has names worth recognizing on the chart: Prohibited (P-), Restricted (R-), Warning (W-), Military Operations Areas, and Alert Areas — the rules for each come in 2-5/3-5.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; sectional legend

- The sectional legend decodes every symbol on the chart — the recognition habit is: unknown line or box, open the legend, not guess.

Source: Sectional chart legend

GOING DEEPER

- A dashed magenta line marks Class E beginning at the SURFACE, protecting an instrument approach at an airport with no tower.

Source: PHAK ch. 15; sectional legend