

Remember The Basic VFR Weather Minimums

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How To Remember The Basic VFR Weather Minimums

FAR Title 14, Part 91.155 provides a tabular listing of the basic VFR weather minimums. For the student pilot, this table is simply daunting to look at (See Figure 1). That initial shock is enough to make memorization all but impossible. Now that you are in shock, let's get right to the process of memorizing this forbidding table.

Airspace	Flight visibility	Distance from clouds
Class A	Not Applicable	Not Applicable.
Class B	3 statute miles	Clear of Clouds.
Class C	3 statute miles	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal.
Class D	3 statute miles	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal.
Class E:		
Less than 10,000 feet MSL	3 statute miles	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal
At or above 10,000 feet MSL	5 statute miles	1,000 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 1 statute mile horizontal.
Class G:		
1,200 feet or less above the surface (regardless of MSL altitude)		
Day, except as provided in §91.155(b)	1 statute mile	Clear of clouds.
Night, except as provided in §91.155(b)	3 statute miles	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal.
More than 1,200 feet above the surface but less than 10,000 feet MSL		
Day	1 statute mile	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal.
Night	3 statute miles	500 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 2,000 feet horizontal.
More than 1,200 feet above the surface and at or above 10,000 feet MSL	5 statute miles	1,000 feet below. 1,000 feet above. 1 statute mile horizontal.

Figure 1 - Basic VFR Weather Minimums Table

We'll begin by breaking up this table to a more manageable form. Each section to memorize will be on their own pages. This will allow you to print them out and use them as a flash card if you desire. We'll begin with Class A airspace and proceed logically from there.

Class A Airspace

This is the easiest of the airspaces to remember simply because VFR is not allowed in Class A airspace. So, there are no applicable Flight Visibility or Distance From Clouds requirements (See Figure 2). Simply remember, **N/A** for Class A Airspace.

Airspace	Flight Visibility	Distance From Clouds
Class A	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Figure 2- Class A Basic VFR Weather Minimums

N/A for Class A Airspace

Memorize it and move on. There's nothing to see here...

Class B Airspace

Not much more difficult than Class A airspace, Class B has one number to remember; 3 Statute Miles for the Flight Visibility (See Figure 3). Remember COC for the Distance From the Clouds. So, for Class B, the Basic VFR Weather Minimums are **3sm and COC**.

Airspace	Flight Visibility	Distance From Clouds
Class B	3 Statute Miles (sm)	Remain Clear of Clouds (COC)

Figure 3 - Class B Basic VFR Weather Minimums

Say It

3sm and COC for Class B

Memorize it and move on.

Class C and D Airspace

Class C airspace and Class D airspace are lumped together because the requirements are identical (See Figure 4). The Flight Visibility minimums for both are also the same as for Class B; **3sm**. The Distance From Clouds now has some numbers to remember.

First off, we need to remember an order to quote these numbers. The requirements call for a distance to remain away from the clouds if you are **B**elow a cloud, **A**bove a cloud, or if you are flying **H**orizontally next to a cloud. From this, we can derive the acronym **BAH**. "**B**eat **A**gainst **H**ead" appears to be an appropriate mnemonic for remembering the order. Have something more devious? Just have fun and make it work for you.

Next we'll add the numbers; **500**, **1000**, and **2000**. Lowest value to highest value. Now, associate them to the order that we remember as "BAH" and you'll have it. 500' **B**elow, 1000' **A**bove, and 2000' **H**orizontally.

That's it for Class C and D airspace. Simply **3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally**.

Airspace	Flight Visibility	Distance From Clouds
Class C	3 Statute Miles (sm)	500' B elow 1000' A bove 2000' H orizontally
Class D	3 Statute Miles (sm)	500' B elow 1000' A bove 2000' H orizontally

Figure 4 - Class C & D Basic VFR Weather Minimums

Say It

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Class C & Class D

Memorize it and move on.

TEST - Class A, B, C, and D Basic VFR Weather Minimums

1. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class A airspace?
2. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class B airspace?
3. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class C airspace?
4. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class D airspace?

Class E Airspace

With Class E airspace, the FAA has created two separate requirements depending on your altitude. If you are below 10,000 feet MSL, the Flight Visibility and the Distance From Clouds is the same as the previous section (Class C & D); **3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally**.

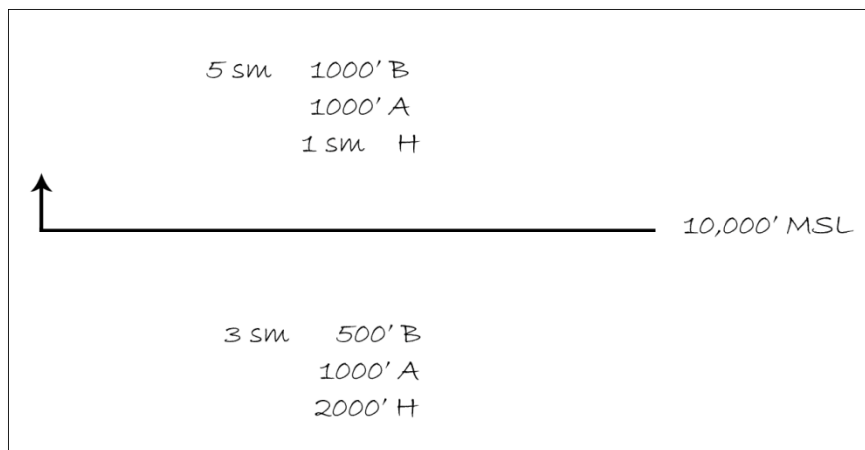
If you are flying at or above 10,000 feet MSL, the requirements, for the most part, increase. The Flight Visibility goes from 3sm to **5sm**. The Distance From Clouds is now all 1's if you will. That is, **1000' Below, 1000' Above, and 1sm Horizontally**. So, for Class E airspace at or above 10,000' MSL, **5sm and 1000' Below, 1000' Above, and 1sm Horizontally** is what you need to remember.

Airspace	Flight Visibility	Distance From Clouds
Class E < 10,000' MSL	3 Statute Miles (sm)	500' Below 1000' Above 2000' Horizontally
Class E ≥ 10,000 MSL	5 Statute Miles (sm)	1000' Below 1000' Above 1sm Horizontally

Figure 5 - Class E Basic VFR Weather Minimums

Draw It

Class E Airspace



Look At Drawing and Say It

Less than 10,000' MSL

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally

At or above 10,000' MSL

5sm and 1000' Below, 1000' Above, and 1sm Horizontally

TEST - Class A, B, C, D, and E Basic VFR Weather Minimums

1. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class A airspace?
2. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class B airspace?
3. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class C airspace?
4. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class D airspace?
5. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class E airspace?

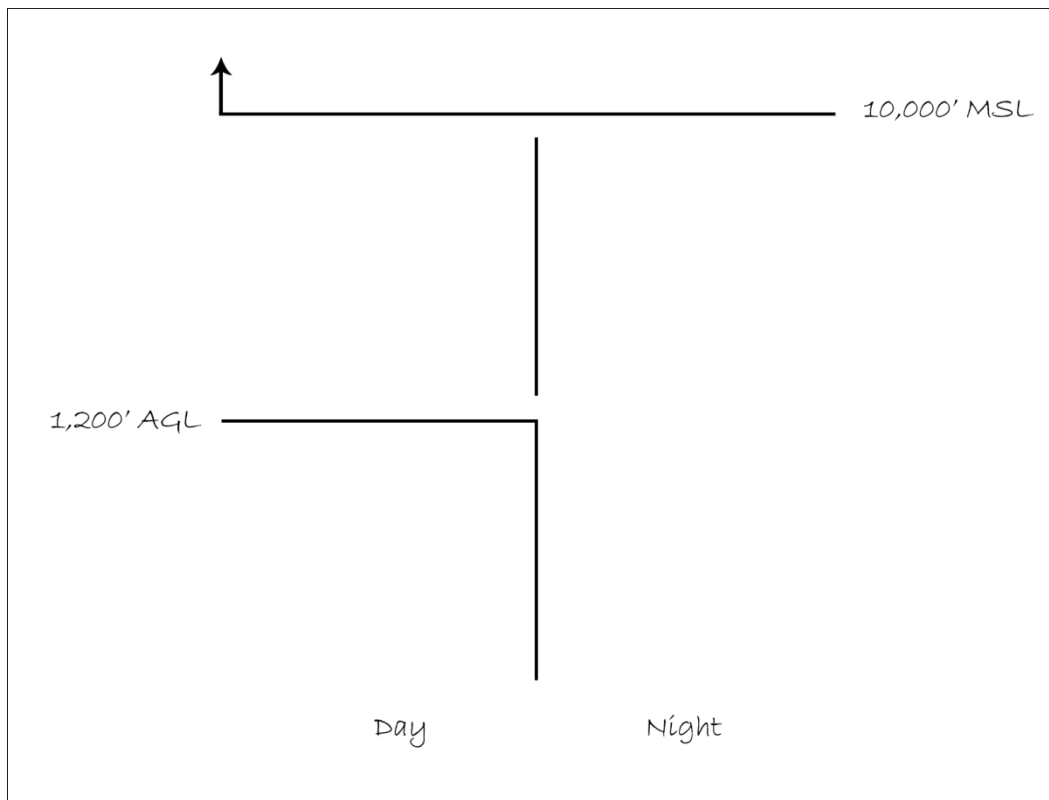
Class G Airspace

This is where it gets really messy. We are not even going to look at the requirements in tabular form. We are just going to draw it and we are going to say it after we draw it. Believe it or not, I was not able to memorize this section until I began to work on my commercial certification. My commercial instructor, David Avari sketched out a backward letter F looking thing and told me to fill in the four areas. This simplified drawing enabled me to memorize the Class G requirements in no time at all. Thank you David!

Below is a modified example of that sketch. Learn to draw it, fill it out, and then you'll be able to say it (by looking at it of course). The first step is to draw the basic outline and label it. Then, we'll go back and fill in the four sections.

Class G Outline

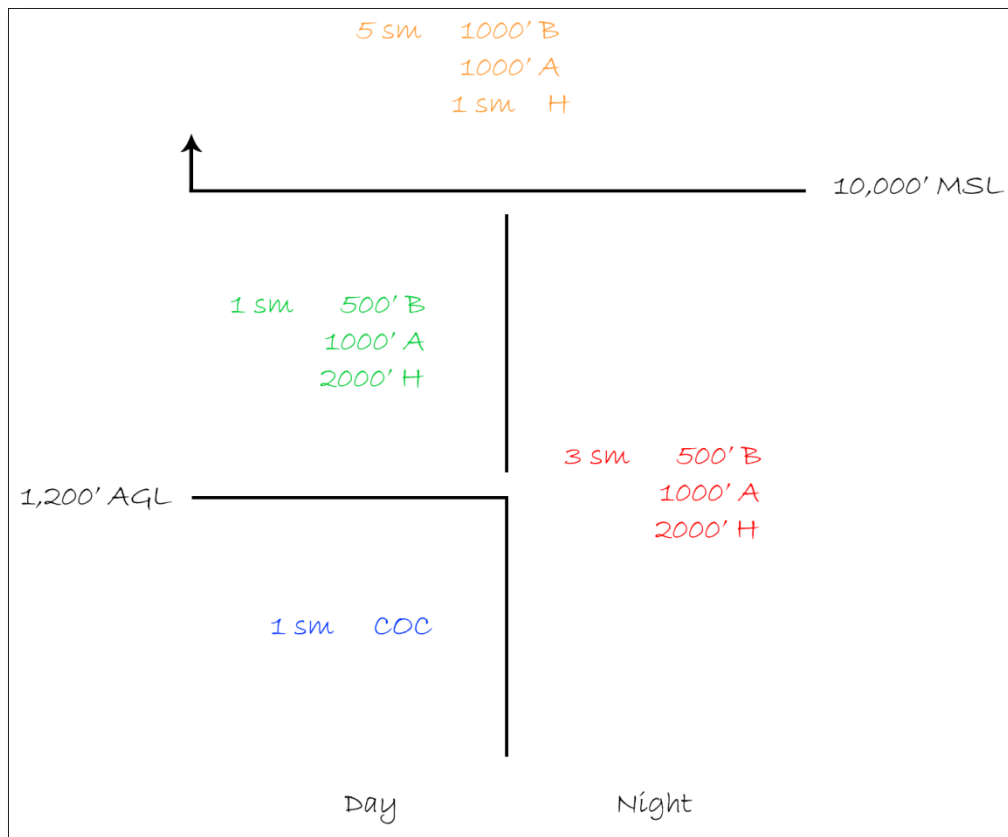
Draw this diagram repeatedly until you have it down pat. This is key to mastering the Class G Basic VFR Weather Minimums. Do not print it out repeatedly to fill out. It is essential that you draw the diagram yourself.



Filled In Class G Outline

Initially, I recommend that you use the table in the FAR/AIM to find the values for the four sections of the outline. This will not only show you that the diagram is accurate, but it will help to set the values in your mind.

Your diagram should look like this:



Look At Drawing and Say It

1,200' or less above the surface (regardless of MSL altitude)

1sm and COC for Day

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Night

More than 1,200' AGL but less than 10,000' MSL

1sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Day

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Night

More than 1,200' AGL and at or above 10,000' MSL

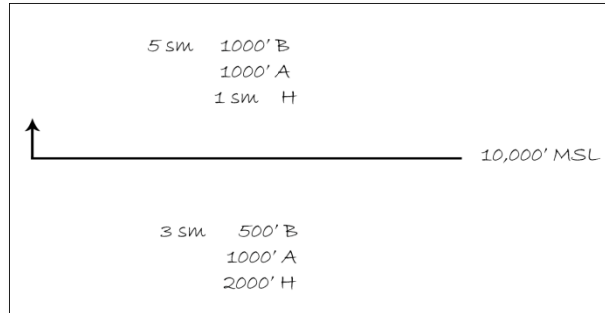
5sm and 1000' Below, 1000' Above, 1sm Horizontally

Putting It All Together

Class A, N/A

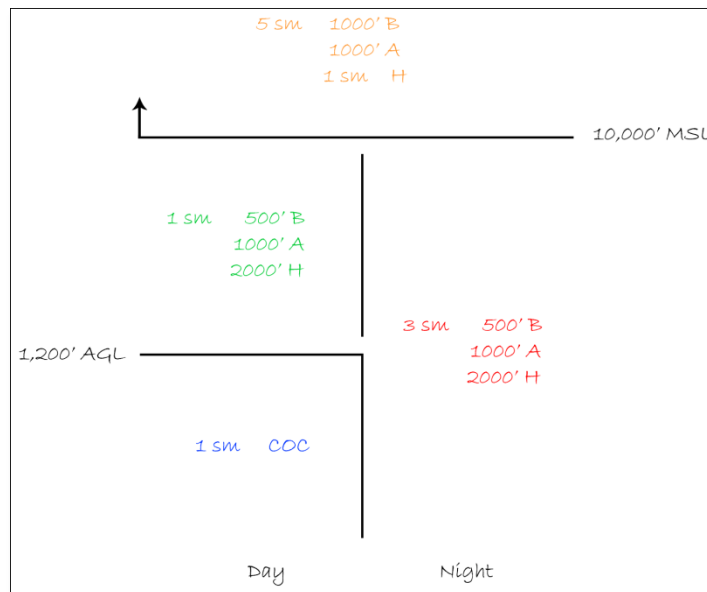
Class B, **3sm and COC** for Class B

Class C & Class D **3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally**



Class E, less than 10,000' MSL, **3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally**

Class E, at or above 10,000' MSL, **5sm and 1000' Below, 1000' Above, and 1sm Horizontally**



1,200' or less above the surface (regardless of MSL altitude)

1sm and COC for Day

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Night

More than 1,200' AGL but less than 10,000' MSL

1sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Day

3sm and 500' Below, 1000' Above, and 2000' Horizontally for Night

More than 1,200' AGL and at or above 10,000' MSL

5sm and 1000' Below, 1000' Above, 1sm Horizontally

TEST - Basic VFR Weather Minimums

1. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class A airspace?
2. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class B airspace?
3. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class C airspace?
4. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class D airspace?
5. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class E airspace?

6. What are the Basic VFR Weather Minimums for Class G airspace?

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