

Aviation Careers and Pilot Routes

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Three aviation careers

All pay figures are **May 2024 U.S. national medians from BLS**, accessed August 2026. They are not DFW starting pay, entry pay, or a guarantee.

CAREER	CORE WORK	COMMON PREPARATION	NATIONAL MEDIAN
Commercial pilot	Fly and navigate aircraft; communicate with crews and ATC	FAA flight training and certificates; some employers require or prefer a degree	\$122,670
Air traffic controller	Direct aircraft movement and maintain separation	FAA eligibility, testing, Academy training, and facility training	\$144,580
Aircraft mechanic / service technician	Inspect, test, repair, and document aircraft systems	Often an FAA-approved maintenance program; military or supervised-experience routes may also qualify	\$78,680

Civilian pilot preparation example

Verify eligibility and medical requirements → Choose an FAA-certificated instructor or school → Earn certificates and ratings → Build required experience and complete employer training

A Part 141 school uses an FAA-approved structured curriculum. A commercial pilot certificate comes before airline transport pilot qualifications and is not the same credential.

U.S. Air Force pilot example

Qualify for an officer route and degree requirement → Meet testing, selection, medical, physical, security, and age requirements → Complete officer and pilot training if selected → Serve the current commitment

Current Air Force information states a 10-year active-duty service commitment after pilot training. Aircraft and location are not guaranteed by preference. This is one branch-specific service route, not free flight school or a promise of selection.

Compare before recommending

EVIDENCE JOB	CIVILIAN EXAMPLE	AIR FORCE EXAMPLE
Two steps	Eligibility/medical check; FAA instructor or school; certificates/ratings; experience	Officer route/degree; screening and selection; officer/pilot training; service
Possible advantage	Multiple school/instructor pathways; student can compare formats and locations	Structured paid military training if selected
Tradeoff or uncertainty	Cost, time, medical eligibility, school quality, and experience vary	Selection is competitive; medical/security standards and service obligation apply
Authorized next source	FAA, certificated school/instructor, college program, counselor	Official Air Force source or authorized recruiter, counselor, current program source

No route is automatically better. A defensible recommendation keeps the **step**, **tradeoff**, and **verification source** together.

Use this frame: “The [route] may fit Sam because [evidence]. A tradeoff is [benefit or limit]. Before deciding, Sam must verify [unknown] with [authorized source or person].”

Local boundary

Current Irving ISD public information lists **Aviation Maintenance**, **Drone Engineering**, and **Marine JROTC** at Irving High School. JROTC supports leadership and citizenship; it is not pilot training and does not guarantee military aviation selection. Course access, prerequisites, and capacity require a current coursebook or counselor check.

Sources

FAA Become a Pilot, Pilot Schools, and Air Traffic Controller Qualifications; BLS occupational profiles; U.S. Air Force pilot career information; Irving ISD CTE. Accessed August 2026.