

Microlighting in the UK ----- A few facts



The British Microlight Aircraft Association

The BMAA is a member's organisation that exists purely to represent the interests of the BMAA members, microlight pilots.

From its offices members of the BMAA staff process pilot's licence applications, airworthiness approvals and memberships. Other staff and volunteers produce a monthly glossy magazine all about microlighting that is sent to all members each month. As well as all this work the BMAA represents the member's interests with other aviation organisations, aviation regulators, planning authorities, medical representatives and many more groups and individuals that influence the freedom and opportunities to fly microlights in the UK.

To join the BMAA

[download the application form at this link](#) or visit the BMAA on-line shop by [following this link to the shop](#).

What is a microlight?

It's simple - a microlight is an aeroplane, capable of flight in the same way as any other. It is restricted to 2 seats, it must weigh around 265kg at most and it must be able to fly at low speed. Other than that, it's an aeroplane!

Actually the rules are slightly more complicated than that and a legal definition of a microlight can be found at the bottom of this page. There are two main types of microlight; the 3-axis (or fixed wing) type which looks more like a conventional aeroplane, and the flexwing type which consists of a delta wing similar to a hang glider with a 'trike' unit suspended underneath it.

Microlight Definition:

A microlight aeroplane is one designed to carry not more than two persons which has a Maximum Total Weight Authorised (MTWA) not exceeding:

300 kg for a single seat landplane.

390 kg for a single seat landplane for which a UK Permit to Fly or Certificate of Airworthiness was in force prior to 1 January 2003

450 kg for a two seat landplane

330 kg for a single seat amphibian or floatplane

495 kg for a two seat amphibian or floatplane

315kg for a single seat landplane equipped with an airframe mounted total recovery parachute system

472.5kg for a two-seat landplane equipped with an airframe mounted total recovery parachute system

A microlight must also have a stalling speed at the maximum weight authorised not exceeding 35 knots calibrated speed.

All UK registered aeroplanes falling within these parameters are Microlight aeroplanes.

What do I need to do to learn to fly?

To fly a microlight in the UK you need to have a Pilot's Licence. All the details are specified below.

The BMAA sells training vouchers on behalf of some of the UK based microlight schools. If you haven't begun your training yet this is a good place to start. To see where the

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schools are and buy your voucher, with the option of a special offer for BMAA membership follow the link to the BMAA web page. [Link to BMAA Flight Vouchers](#)

On the BMAA web site you will also find a list of clubs and schools. Follow this [link to find a school in your area](#).

The Microlight Pilot's Licence

The National Private Pilot's Licence (NPPL) is a UK specific pilot's licence developed in 2002. It is not an internationally recognised licence and does not automatically entitle the holder to fly aircraft in other countries.

The NPPL may include in it aircraft Class Ratings that allow the holder to fly specific classes of aircraft, such as microlights.

To obtain a NPPL with a Microlight Class Rating you must complete flight training with a UK Civil Aviation Authority authorised flying instructor entitled to instruct on microlights.

Flight Training Requirements

A syllabus may be downloaded from the NPPL Web site by following this [Link to NPPL web site](#) or purchased from the BMAA on-line shop by following this [Link to BMAA Shop](#)

The Microlight Class Rating can be issued with either of two options. The options are **Without** Operational Limitations or **With** Operational Limitations.

The minimum flight training required for the grant of a NPPL with a Microlight Class Rating With Operational Limitations is:

- Minimum total flight time under instruction 15 hours
- Minimum flight time solo 7 hours

The Operational Limitations at initial issue are:

- The licence is valid for flight in the UK only
- The pilot may not carry any passenger
- The pilot may not fly with a cloud base less than 1000 feet above ground level or with less than 10 kilometres visibility
- The pilot may not fly further than 8 nautical miles from take off.

The minimum flight training required for the grant of a NPPL with a Microlight Class Rating Without Operational Limitations is:

- Minimum total flight time under instruction 25 hours
- Minimum flight time solo 10 hours
- Minimum total navigation flight time 5 hours
- Minimum solo navigation flight time 3 hours

As part of your flight training you must take and pass a test with an authorised flight examiner to demonstrate your ability to fly a microlight through all the manoeuvres that you will have learned during training. The test is called a General Skills Test (GST). The flight time of the GST can count towards the minimum total flight time required to obtain the NPPL but not towards the solo minimum time.

To ensure that when your licence is issued your skill level and knowledge is current you must have completed the minimum solo flight time, all the navigation flight training and the GST within the nine month period immediately prior to applying for your licence.

Ground Training Requirements

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The Microlight syllabus lists the subject matter that an applicant for a Microlight Class Rating must understand. There is no minimum requirement for training by an instructor to achieve this knowledge but the applicant must have demonstrated a knowledge of the subject matter by passing examinations.

There are written examinations in five subjects. Meteorology, Navigation, Aviation Law, Human Performance and Limitations and Aircraft Technical subjects. The examinations must have been passed within the twenty four months immediately prior to applying for your licence.

There is one further examination to complete your demonstration of knowledge of the aircraft type that you have used to complete your GST. This examination is an oral examination and must be conducted by a flight examiner entitled to examine in microlight aircraft. It is usual, but not required, that the examination is conducted at the same time as the GST by the same examiner. The ground oral examination must have been passed within the nine months immediately prior to applying for your licence.

Previous flying experience?

If you have some previous flying experience you might be eligible for a reduction in the amount of flight training that you need. The current credits are available by following this [link to the credit document](#).

Licence application

Application for the grant of a NPPL with a Microlight Class rating must be made in writing on the NPPL Microlight Licence application form through the BMAA Licence Administration Centre at the BMAA office address. To download the form follow this [link to licence application form](#).

Removing the Operational Limitations from a NPPL Microlight Class Rating.

To remove Limitation 2 the holder must have completed at least 25 hours of total flying in microlights and at least 10 hours solo flying in microlights. The holder's experience is certified in their log book by a flight examiner and the Limitation ceases to apply from that time.

To remove Limitations 3 and 4 the holder must have completed at least 25 hours of total flying in microlights, at least 10 hours solo flying in microlights. The holder must have completed the navigation training requirements specified in flight Exercise 18 within the nine month period immediately prior to applying to have the limitations removed. Application to have Limitations 3 and 4 removed must be made in writing on the NPPL Microlight Licence application form through the BMAA Licence Administration Centre at the BMAA office address.

Medical requirements

A pilot may only fly microlights as Pilot In Command in the UK if they hold valid medical certification.

The NPPL medical certification can be by a Self Declaration signed by the pilot and then countersigned by the pilot's General Practitioner (GP). The pilot must be registered with the GP who countersigns the Declaration and the GP must be a UK registered GP with a current licence to practice. Where a pilot is registered to a Medical Practice it is acceptable that any GP member of the Practice can countersign the Declaration. It is a requirement that the GP who countersigns the Declaration has access to the pilot's medical notes.

Details of the medical requirements and an application form with notes for the pilot and notes for the GP are available from the BMAA web site, follow this [link to the medical requirements information page](#).

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Other accepted medical certification may be available, but applicants should check with their instructor prior to solo flight.

The BMAA strongly recommends that student pilots obtain their medical declaration at the start of their training to ensure that they will be able to hold such a medical, and do not wait until just before they are ready to fly solo, by which time they must hold a valid medical.

Time and cost

The hours quoted above are minima that only the most naturally talented young students achieve. The rest of us normally take a little longer. A few achieve their licences within weeks, others take months, and those on a tight budget sometimes take a year or two.

When budgeting for flying training, it is wise to calculate the cost of the minimum number of hours required and then add between 50 and 100% of that cost, depending on how confident you feel of your own ability. Hourly rates vary depending on where the instructor flies from and what his/her overheads are.

In Britain the high cost of fuel will also add to the overall expense. Realistically, a budget of £3.0–4.5k should cover your training.

Don't forget ground school. In addition to flying training the student pilot must also learn a number of ground school subjects that are considered vital to becoming a safe and competent pilot. The best results are always achieved by a combination of attending lessons and private study.

We hope this guide has been helpful.