



The Complete **PPL** Theory Study Plan

A student-to-student guide to passing the nine EASA PPL(A) theory exams, built around retention instead of one-pass cramming.

Inside: the study method that actually sticks, a weekly rhythm you can keep alongside your flying, a realistic multi-week map from your first subject to your last exam, and a straight-talking breakdown of every one of the nine subjects, what each is really testing, where people lose marks, and how to attack it.

All nine subjects

Weekly rhythm

Retention-first

Exam-day tactics

A free guide from SkyStudy · skystudyatpl.com

How to use this plan

The PPL(A) theory is nine separate subjects, and most people study them while also flying, working, or studying for something else. The students who pass cleanly are rarely the ones who cram hardest the night before. They are the ones who keep returning to each subject in short sessions so nothing they learned in week one has faded by exam week.

This plan gives you a repeatable weekly rhythm and a suggested order for the subjects. Treat the number of weeks as flexible: some students clear the theory in six to eight weeks of focused part-time study, others take longer around a full-time job. Keep the structure and stretch or compress the blocks to fit your life. Two things do not move: practise questions from day one, and review earlier subjects every week.

The principle

New learning plus short, frequent review. Every week pairs one main subject with quick retrieval practice on the subjects you finished earlier, so nothing goes stale before your sittings.

The trap to avoid

Passing a subject once and never opening it again. By exam week it has faded, and relearning from cold costs far more time than a few minutes of weekly review would have.

Why this works: how memory actually sticks

You do not need learning theory for its own sake, but four ideas decide whether weeks of effort survive to exam day. Build your week around them.

1. Active recall beats re-reading

Re-reading notes feels productive and mostly is not. Forcing your brain to retrieve an answer, by doing questions or covering the page and explaining it from memory, is what builds durable recall. If you can only do one thing, do questions.

2. Spaced repetition fights forgetting

You forget fastest right after learning. Reviewing on a widening schedule, roughly a day later, then a few days, then a week, then a few weeks, resets the forgetting curve each time for very little effort. A spaced-repetition tool does this scheduling for you so you only review what you are about to forget.

3. Interleaving beats blocking

Studying one subject for days straight feels smooth but transfers poorly. Mixing a few subjects across the week is harder in the moment and far better for retention, and it helps you tell similar topics apart, which the PPL theory tests often exploit.

4. Your wrong answers are the syllabus

Every question you get wrong is a precise instruction about what to study next. Keep a running list of weak topics and let it, not the calendar, decide your weak-area sessions.

The nine subjects: what each is really testing

A straight-talking map of every PPL(A) theory subject: what it tests, where students lose marks, and how to attack it. The calculation-heavy subjects (Flight Performance and Planning, Navigation) reward early, repeated practice, so do not leave them until the end.

Subject	What it really tests	Where marks are lost	How to attack it
Air Law	Rules of the air, airspace, light and marshalling signals, VFR requirements and basic ICAO structure.	Sheer volume; confusing similar limits and definitions.	Short, frequent recall from day one. Do not cram it; spread it across the whole plan.
Human Performance	Basic aviation physiology, hypoxia, vision and hearing, disorientation, and simple decision-making.	Underestimating it because it "reads easy"; precise thresholds and effects.	Respect it and learn the specific facts. It is high-yield for the time it takes.
Meteorology	The atmosphere, pressure and wind, cloud and fog, icing, thunderstorms, and reading METARs and TAFs.	Breadth, and reading real weather reports under time pressure.	Build one mental model of the atmosphere, then hang detail on it. Use the free SkyStudy weather decoders to read real METARs and TAFs.
Communications	Standard radiotelephony phraseology, the order of calls, and VFR radio procedures.	Imprecise phraseology and getting the procedure order wrong.	Short, frequent practice, read aloud. Say the calls, do not just read them.
Principles of Flight	The four forces, lift and drag, stability, stalls, and how the controls work.	Treating it as pure memory instead of understanding the forces.	Build genuine understanding of lift, drag and stability first; the questions follow from the concepts.
Operational Procedures	Practical operations: fuel and oxygen requirements, fire, contamination, noise, and emergencies.	Rote operational detail that fades quickly.	Spaced recall, and link it to Air Law, they reinforce each other.

Subject	What it really tests	Where marks are lost	How to attack it
Flight Performance & Planning	Mass and balance, take-off and landing performance, and simple fuel and route planning.	Arithmetic slips, unit mix-ups, and mis-read graphs.	Adopt one fixed method per problem type and drill it. Start early; speed comes from reps.
Aircraft General Knowledge	The engine, systems, instruments and airframe of a light aircraft, and their failures.	Breadth; memorising facts without understanding the system.	Learn each system as normal operation, then failure. Understanding makes the facts stick.
Navigation	Charts, the triangle of velocities, compass and magnetism, time and distance, and basic radio aids.	Arithmetic and plotting errors; nav-computer fumbles.	Own the nav computer and the triangle early, then practise until plotting is fast and clean.

Your weekly template

Repeat this shape every week and just change which subject is the main block. Aim for consistency over volume: a few focused hours beat many distracted ones.

Block	What you do
Main study (60%)	Learn new theory for this week's primary subject, then immediately practise questions on what you just read. Read, then test.
Retention (25%)	Short question sets on older subjects. Let a spaced-repetition tool surface what you are about to forget rather than guessing.
Weak-area fix (10%)	Revisit the specific topics your wrong answers exposed this week, not whole subjects you already know.
Review & plan (5%)	Five minutes at week's end: note weak topics and choose next week's primary subject.

A sample week (about 8 hours)

Day	Time	Focus
Mon	1.5 h	New theory, primary subject
Tue	1.0 h	Primary-subject questions + 10 min review of an old subject
Wed	1.5 h	New theory, primary subject
Thu	1.0 h	Primary-subject questions + spaced-repetition review
Fri	1.0 h	Weak-area fix from this week's wrong answers
Sat	2.0 h	Mixed review across older subjects (interleaving)
Sun	Rest or catch up	Optional: a short practice set + 5 min planning

Tip: question practice is not just a test. Every wrong answer tells you exactly what to review next, which is far more useful than re-reading notes you already understand.

A suggested eight-week outline

A suggested order for steady part-time study. Subjects that reinforce each other are paired, and the review load grows as more subjects come online. Adjust to your own strengths and your flying schedule, but keep the calculation subjects early rather than saving them for the end.

Weeks	Primary focus	Running retention
Weeks 1-2	Air Law, then Operational Procedures	Light: review Air Law while learning Ops.
Weeks 3-4	Principles of Flight, Human Performance	Weekly question sets on Air Law and Ops.
Weeks 5-6	Aircraft General Knowledge, Meteorology	Rotate the first four subjects; start reading real METARs.
Week 7	Navigation, then Flight Performance and Planning	Keep earlier subjects warm; drill the nav and planning maths.
Week 8	Communications, plus mixed review and exam polish	Mostly practice sets and weak-area targeting across all nine.

Sequencing your exams. How many PPL theory exams you can sit at once, the order, the time window, and the number of attempts are set by your national authority and your training organisation, and they can change. Confirm the current rules with your ATO or flying club before you book, and line your subjects up to fit them.

Practice tests: when and how

Timed practice is most useful once a subject is stable enough that pacing pressure teaches you something. Used too early it mostly measures what you have not learned yet. Used at the right time it builds exam stamina, exposes careless errors and calibrates your timing.

- Start with single-subject question sets on subjects you have finished.
- Move to longer, mixed sets in the final week or two before each sitting.
- Review every wrong answer the same day, while the reasoning is fresh.
- Treat a practice test as a diagnosis, not a grade: the value is in what it reveals.

Exam-day tactics

- **You need 75% to pass each subject.** Aim comfortably above it in practice so a bad day still clears.
- **Watch your pace.** Know roughly how long you can spend per question and stick to it; do not let two hard questions eat the time for ten easy ones.
- **Flag and move on.** Mark anything slow, bank all the easy marks first, then return to the flagged ones.
- **Answer everything.** PPL theory exams are not negatively marked, so never leave a question blank, make your best choice.
- **Read the whole question.** Many wrong answers are right answers to a slightly different question. Watch units, "except"/"not", and limits.
- **Do not second-guess.** Change an answer only if you have a concrete reason, not a vague feeling.

Confirm the rules before you book. Pass marks, the time window to complete all nine subjects, and the number of attempts allowed are set by regulation and can change. Check the current figures and the order you are allowed to sit exams with your ATO before you commit to a date.

Why PPL study plans fail (and the fix)

The failure	The fix
Studying for completion, never reviewing old subjects.	Bake weekly retention into every week from the start.
Treating every subject as equal in time and difficulty.	Give Navigation and Flight Planning more reps and start them early.
Memorising practice answers instead of understanding them.	Read the explanation for every wrong answer; learn the why.
Re-reading notes and calling it studying.	Switch to active recall: questions and explain-from-memory.
No rhythm, so motivation runs the schedule.	Use the fixed weekly template; show up even on low-energy days.

Weekly checkpoints

By the end of each block, you should be able to tick these:

- ☐ **Weeks 1-2:** Air Law and Operational Procedures first pass done; a daily-ish recall habit established.
- ☐ **Weeks 3-4:** Principles of Flight and Human Performance covered; weekly review of the first subjects running.
- ☐ **Weeks 5-6:** Aircraft General Knowledge and Meteorology covered; comfortable reading a real METAR.
- ☐ **Week 7:** Navigation and Flight Planning covered; the nav and planning maths fast and reliable.
- ☐ **Week 8:** Communications done; scoring consistently above 75% on mixed practice across all nine subjects.

Want this on autopilot?

SkyStudy turns this plan into action: a PPL(A) question bank across all nine theory subjects with worked explanations, spaced repetition that schedules your reviews, and practice that points you at your weak areas. Start with the free PPL quiz, no card needed.

skystudyatpl.com/ppl

SkyStudy is an independent study aid and is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or sponsored by EASA or any aviation authority. Its questions are independently authored revision questions, not exam dumps. This plan is general study guidance, not regulatory or training advice, and exam results are not guaranteed. Pass marks, time limits and attempt limits are set by regulation and can change, always follow the current rules and your approved training organisation's requirements. © SkyStudy · skystudyatpl.com