

# Renew your CFI with WINGS

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Let's start off by saying that the Soaring Safety Foundation believes that the best way to renew your CFI is by attending a Flight Instructor Refresher Course (FIRC). The SSF travels around the country providing them. Attending a FIRC keeps you up to date on the latest changes and you get to interact with other flight instructors. However, sometimes due to illness or other factors you just can't make it to a FIRC before your renewal date. Letting your CFI expire forces you into a checkride scenario. What can you do?

FAR 61.197 provides guidance on how to renew an unexpired CFI. It provides the following options:

- Pass a practical test for an additional or current CFI rating.
- Show an 80% pass rate for at least 5 practical test signoffs.
- Complete a Flight Instructor Refresher Course (FIRC)
- Or have served as an airline or military instructor/check airman.

The addition or revalidation of a rating to your CFI Certificate via a practical test is always an option but who wants to take a checkride when you don't have to?

The 80% pass rate means not only signing off 5 applicants, but the 80% requirement means you can only have one initial failure up through 9 signoffs. If two signoffs need retakes and now you need 10.

FIRCs are the preferred method, but as of yet, must be completed by your renewal date. There is a three calendar month pre-expiration date grace period that allows you to renew early while keeping your existing expiration month. In addition, there is a proposed regulation change that will allow a several month post expiration date grace period as well..

The military instructor/check airman option is a good deal if you are one, but most CFGs don't have that option.

There is another method, not listed in FAR 61.197 (though that is also proposed). That is the use of the FAA WINGS pilot proficiency program.

We've written numerous times in this column about the WINGS program and how the SSF has recently been able to add additional glider activities to make it even more useful for glider pilots. WINGS can also be used to renew your unexpired CFI.

Renewing your CFI through a FIRC or by the 80% option doesn't meet the requirements for a Flight Review under FAR 61.56, which we must still accomplish. Participation in the WINGS program is a good way to complete the Flight Review requirement and it sets you up to renew your CFI with your WINGS activity record.

The basis for a CFI renewal is covered in advisory circular AC61-91J. The program is administered through the faasafety.org website. The good news is it doesn't involve any travel, checkrides, or even any pass-rate requirements.



To use WINGS to renew a CFI, the instructor must have evaluated at least 15 wings flight activities in the preceding 24 months for at least 5 different pilots; and the instructor must have a current phase of WINGS at the time of application. The current phase of WINGS (i.e., 3 knowledge and 3 flight activities) will reset your Flight Review clock. The tricky bit here is that a WINGS phase is only valid for one year, while the flight review you receive as a result of it is valid for two. The Flight Review expiration date is clearly shown on the website, but the WINGS phase date is not. So, don't confuse the two. Planning to complete a flight review using WINGS within the year prior to your CFI renewal makes this easy.

Considering that WINGS can be used not only for flight reviews, but now credit can be given for the A, B, C badges, launch endorsements, glider student activity and more. Instructors now have even more opportunity to utilize the program and accumulate the necessary flight activities given over the two year period between renewals.

The faasafety.gov website makes the process easy. The Instructor Portal pages provide links to list the credits given, to give credit for an activity, print a pilot's WINGS checklist, and a WINGS Instructor Guide. Since all instructor's activities under WINGS are processed through the website, a record of those activities makes it easy to show when you meet the number needed for a renewal. It also provides a running timeline of your own WINGS credit history for the past 12 months. No need to dig through logbooks or other records. Reports for different time periods, including the 24-month window for CFI renewal can be saved as a PDF or CSV file to forward with an FAA form 8710-1 to your local FAA FSDO or Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE). See example in Figure 1.

That last point is very important and must be done before your CFI certificate expiration date! Just completing these required WINGS activities does not automatically renew your CFI certificate. To complete the renewal process you must create and submit a renewal application using the FAA 8710-1 form to your local FSDO or DPE. That application will then be signed and submitted, along with the PDF or CSV file you created, to the appropriate FAA office in Oklahoma City. You will receive a new temp certificate and the FAA will mail you a new plastic certificate once the application is processed. The Soaring Safety Foundation encourages instructors to use the FAA's WINGS program and promote its use to their trainees. A CFI renewal option is just one more reason to have WINGS as a regular part of your instructing toolkit.

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