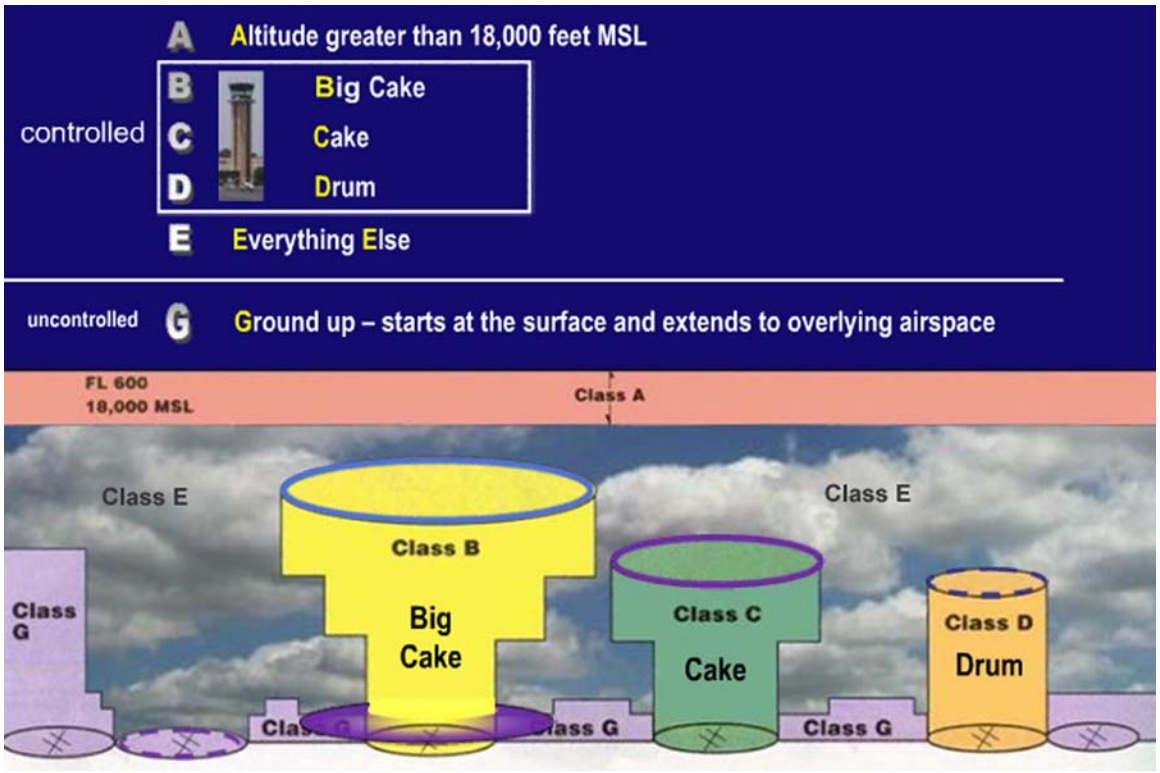
Airports and Airspaces Lesson Review



Airspaces are identified by letter, A through G. Class F is not used in the United States.

Airspaces are divided into **controlled** and **uncontrolled** volumes. In controlled airspaces, some types of **ATC (air traffic control) services** are offered. ATC generally does not talk to airplanes in uncontrolled airspaces.

All uncontrolled airspace is classified as Class G. Class G starts at the surface and extends upward to the airspace that overlies it – usually Class E. In most parts of the country, Class G becomes Class E at either 700 feet agl (above ground level) or 1200 feet agl. In mountainous areas, Class G may extend as high as 14,500 msl (above mean sea level).

Class A airspace begins at 18,000 feet msl. No VFR flights are allowed in Class A. You must be on an IFR flightplan to fly in Class A airspace.

Classes B, C, and D refer to airspaces around towered airports. If the tower closes, the airspace becomes either Class E or G. Temporary control towers may sometimes be in operation at airports in Class E or G.

Class B surrounds the biggest airports in the country. The airspaces are generally shaped like a large inverted wedding cake, identified by solid blue concentric outlines on the sectional. You must have an explicit clearance to enter Class B airspace. An operational Mode C transponder is required.

Class C surrounds airports that are serviced by an approach controller. It is shaped like a two-tiered cake and is identified by solid magenta outlines on the sectional. You must be in radio communication with the approach controller to enter Class C airspace. An operational Mode C transponder is required.

Class D airspaces surround the smallest of the towered airport airspaces. Nonetheless, the airports can be very busy (even busier than some Class C airports). Class D is identified on the sectional by a (usually circular) dashed blue outline. You must be in radio communication with the tower controller to enter Class D airspace. A transponder is recommended, but not required.

Class E is all remaining controlled airspace that is not A, B, C, or D. It fills the volume between the other controlled airspaces. Class E may extend to the surface in some places. Class E at the surface is represented by a dashed magenta outline.

Class A	*controlled*	Altitude greater than 17,999 feet MSL; *IFR only*
Class B		Biggest airports; shaped like an big, inverted wedding cake
Class C		Congested airports, but less so than Class B; shaped like a cake
Class D		Down-home airports; shaped like a column or drum
Class E		Everything else that is controlled; usually starts at 1,200 ft. AGL
Class G	*uncontrolled*	Ground upward; may contain untowered airports

Special Use Airspaces

A MOA is a Military Operations Area. On sectional charts, MOAs are surrounded by magenta hatched outlines. VFR flight is allowed inside of a MOA, but it is a good practice to avoid these areas when there is ongoing military activity.

A TRSA is a Terminal Radar Services Area. This is an area, generally surrounding a busy Class D airport that is under control of an approach controller. On sectional charts, TRSAs are surrounded by concentric dark gray circles. VFR flight is allowed inside of a TRSA, and communication with the controller is recommended, but not required.

Restricted Areas are identified on sectional charts by blue hatched outlines, and labeled with a bold letter R followed by identifying numbers. You must have a permission from the controlling agency to enter a Restricted Area (unless they are "cold", i.e. not in use).

Prohibited Areas are also identified on sectional charts by a blue hatched outline. Inside, however, is a bold letter P followed by identifying numbers. Flight inside of Prohibited Areas is prohibited

TFR stands for Temporary Flight Restriction. These are locations where flight is either severely restricted or prohibited altogether. Because of their temporary nature, they do not appear on any charts. TFR areas have become much more common since 9/11. They might pop up while important politicians are visiting or a large gathering of people is ongoing. It is very important to find out if there are any TFRs in your path before embarking on a trip. Flight Service can give you this information when you get your briefing. If you fly with Flight Following, ATC will probably tell you if any TFRs are ahead, but ultimately, it is your responsibility to know where they are and to avoid them.