

The FAA instrument rating doesn't have an expiration, but does have time limits within which instrument experience must be exercised (recency of experience) or an IPC (instrument proficiency check) must be taken. If these are not met, then one may not exercise the privileges of the instrument rating until proficiency has been demonstrated.

If you have done 6 approaches, holding and airways tracking within 6 months, you don't need to renew it or proficiency test it with the examiner, if you were proficient to begin with.

If you went several years without currency, flying six approaches, tracking, and holding wouldn't make you current. You'll need the IPC.

But if you're current in the airplane, you have six months before you're out of currency. That is, you need to be able to look back at any given time and find that you meet the currency requirements in the last six months. This is for flying passengers.

If you don't meet those requirements, you have six more months in which you can meet them...during these six months you can't fly passengers under IFR until you've met the currency requirements. If you go past those six months...in other words if you haven't met the currency requirements in the last 12 months, you need an IPC.

§ 61.57 Recent flight experience: Pilot in command.

(c) Instrument experience. Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command under IFR or in weather conditions less than the minimums prescribed for VFR, unless within the preceding 6 calendar months, that person has:

(1) For the purpose of obtaining instrument experience in an aircraft (other than a glider), performed and logged under actual or simulated instrument conditions, either in flight in the appropriate category of aircraft for the instrument privileges sought or in a flight simulator or flight training device that is representative of the aircraft category for the instrument privileges sought—

(i) At least six instrument approaches;

(ii) Holding procedures; and

(iii) Intercepting and tracking courses through the use of navigation systems.

(2) For the purpose of obtaining instrument experience in a glider, performed and logged under actual or simulated instrument conditions—

(i) At least 3 hours of instrument time in flight, of which 1 1/2 hours may be acquired in an airplane or a glider if no passengers are to be carried; or

(ii) 3 hours of instrument time in flight in a glider if a passenger is to be carried.

(d) Instrument proficiency check. Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, a person who does not meet the instrument experience requirements of paragraph (c) of this section within the prescribed time, or within 6 calendar months after the prescribed time, may not serve as pilot in command under IFR or in weather conditions less than the minimums prescribed for VFR until that person passes an instrument proficiency check consisting of a representative number of tasks required by the instrument rating practical test.

(1) The instrument proficiency check must be—

(i) In an aircraft that is appropriate to the aircraft category;

(ii) For other than a glider, in a flight simulator or flight training device that is representative of the aircraft category; or

(iii) For a glider, in a single-engine airplane or a glider.

(2) The instrument proficiency check must be given by—

(i) An examiner;

(ii) A person authorized by the U.S. Armed Forces to conduct instrument flight tests, provided the person being tested is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces;

(iii) A company check pilot who is authorized to conduct instrument flight tests under part 121, 125, or 135 of this chapter or subpart K of part 91 of this chapter, and provided that both the check pilot and the pilot being tested are employees of that operator or fractional ownership program manager, as applicable;

(iv) An authorized instructor; or

(v) A person approved by the Administrator to conduct instrument practical tests.