



HEADING CHANGE

AIRLINE MOVE PREP FOR EXPERIENCED PILOTS

FREE SELF-CHECK · 25 QUESTIONS · SCORE OUT OF 75

The Airline Move Readiness Self-Check

25 honest questions for experienced pilots facing a technical interview or a direct-entry captain application.

By Captain Adi

A current A320 captain who has passed selection at three airlines across Asia and the Middle East, the last time as a direct-entry captain.

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READ THIS FIRST

Before you start

I've been flying airliners for more than 20 years. I've passed selection at three airlines across Asia and the Middle East, the last time as a direct-entry captain. I've also never sat on an interview panel. So this isn't "what assessors want". It's what I learned from the candidate's chair, three times.

Who it's for: first officers and captains thinking about changing airline, moving region, or applying for a direct-entry captain post. That includes pilots who are tired of waiting for an upgrade that isn't coming.

How to score

- 0 Not yet.
- 1 With help, or only on a good day.
- 2 Usually.
- 3 Consistently, and I could prove it in an interview today.

Tick one circle per question. The PDF is fillable on most computers and phones, or print it and use a pen. Be strict: score what you could prove in an interview today, not what you'd like to be true.

Each section is tagged with the public ICAO/EASA pilot competency it relates to (for example KNO, Application of Knowledge). Always follow your own company's documents.

HOW TO USE IT WELL

Take about 20 minutes, in one sitting, somewhere quiet. Don't look anything up while you score. Then circle your five lowest questions: that's your study list.

**A TECHNICAL SYSTEMS KNOWLEDGE**

Application of Knowledge, KNO

The hardest selection of my career leaned heavily on technical aircraft systems questions, and that's where many candidates struggled. Afterwards, training included an oral systems exam with the national aviation authority. To prepare, we had to know the meaning of every button and light in the cockpit.

		0	1	2	3
01	Can I sketch each major system on my current type from memory: electrics, hydraulics, fuel, pneumatics, flight controls?	☐	☐	☐	☐
02	For any light or annunciation on the overhead panel, can I say what it means and what I'd do next?	☐	☐	☐	☐
03	Can I explain what I'd lose, and what I'd still have, after a major failure in each system?	☐	☐	☐	☐
04	Can I explain my aircraft's backup sources of power (for example the APU and other emergency sources) and when each one is used?	☐	☐	☐	☐
05	Can I answer basic principles-of-flight and performance questions (lift, stall, high-altitude limits, take-off and landing performance) in simple words?	☐	☐	☐	☐
06	Do I know the basic differences between my type and the type I'm applying for, at the level a public study guide covers?	☐	☐	☐	☐
07	Can I talk through a weather, fuel and alternate decision for a long sector without notes?	☐	☐	☐	☐
08	When I don't know a technical answer, do I say so plainly and say how I'd find out?	☐	☐	☐	☐

FROM MY OWN FLYING

In my very first airline interview, the panel asked me about the Boeing 747. I had no experience on it at all. I was frank and said I wasn't sure. I still got the job. An honest "I'm not sure" beats a confident guess, especially in a technical interview, where a made-up answer can come apart at the very next follow-up question.

**B PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS**

Application of Procedures, PRO

		0	1	2	3
09	Can I explain why key procedures exist on my type, and not only recite them?	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Do I know my licence, medical, recency and hours inside out, and do they match the published minimums for the airline I'm applying to?	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Is my logbook complete, totalled and certified the way the airline asks?	☐	☐	☐	☐

C LEADING AS A CAPTAIN

LTW, COM

		0	1	2	3
12	Can I give a real example of leading a crew through something unplanned?	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	If asked how I work with new, younger first officers, can I answer with a real approach and a real example?	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Can I explain how I build a safe, open flight deck where the first officer will speak up?	☐	☐	☐	☐

FROM MY OWN FLYING

When I applied as a direct-entry captain, the interview wasn't about the basics. They knew my experience. They asked how I'd handle a new generation of young first officers, how I fly a well-known visual approach into a major international airport, and finally when I could start. In my experience, once you're experienced, the questions shift from "do you know it?" to "how do you lead, and how do you fly the hard stuff?"

**D DECISION MAKING AND AWARENESS**

PSD, SAW, WLM

		0	1	2	3
15	Can I tell, in about 90 seconds, a true story of a decision under pressure: situation, options, decision, result?	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Can I tell a true story of a technical failure I handled, and what it taught me?	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Can I explain how I keep a plan B (and a plan C) ready on every flight?	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Can I describe how I share workload when things get busy, without doing it all myself?	☐	☐	☐	☐

FROM MY OWN FLYING

On a short sector over the sea, we heard that several airports in the region had closed because of a volcanic eruption. I asked my first officer for his plan, and he went blank. So I led: we ran the checklist, checked the alternates' weather and our routing, worked out whether we'd have the fuel to reach an alternate if we couldn't land at our destination, and talked through what to expect if we met volcanic ash. We continued and landed safely at our destination. We were the last aircraft in before that airport closed too. We were lucky, but we were also ready for the other outcome.

E FLYING SKILLS

FPA, FPM

		0	1	2	3
19	Am I current and comfortable hand-flying, including raw-data approaches, in a simulator I may never have sat in?	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	If the assessment simulator is a different manufacturer or type from mine, have I planned how to prepare for it using public material?	☐	☐	☐	☐

**F THE MOVE ITSELF**

		0	1	2	3
21	Can I say clearly, positively and honestly why I want to leave my current airline, without criticising it?	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Do I know this airline's fleet, network, bases and recent news from its own public pages?	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	Do I understand the contract basics before I apply: training bond, seniority, base, roster, how and when expats can upgrade?	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	If I'm waiting for an upgrade that isn't coming, have I compared waiting with moving, honestly, with my family?	☐	☐	☐	☐

FROM MY OWN LIFE

My command upgrade was once due, and then my airline froze upgrades because of events no one there could control. I could have waited. Instead I changed airline and region, and later joined my current airline as a direct-entry captain. Waiting isn't wrong. Just make it a choice, not a default.

G DELIVERY

COM

		0	1	2	3
25	Can I answer "tell me about yourself" calmly in about 60 to 90 seconds, linking my career to this job, without going blank?	☐	☐	☐	☐

SOMETHING I SEE A LOT

Nerves make good pilots go blank, even on that first easy question. Many candidates also arrive without studying the airline, their aircraft or the basic principles of flight, and some make up answers when they're unsure. All three are fixable with preparation.



OUT OF 75

Your score

A	Technical systems knowledge		/ 24
B	Procedures and regulations		/ 9
C	Leading as a captain		/ 9
D	Decision making and awareness		/ 12
E	Flying skills		/ 6
F	The move itself		/ 12
G	Delivery		/ 3

TOTAL / 75**60 to 75**

Strong. Polish your stories and your technical depth on the target type.

40 to 59

Solid base with clear gaps. Section A (systems) is usually the best place to start.

Under 40

Give yourself a few months of steady preparation before you apply.

This is a self-reflection tool. It doesn't predict any airline's result, and it isn't endorsed by any airline or authority.

MY FIVE LOWEST QUESTIONS (MY STUDY LIST)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.



YOUR PLAN

What to do next

- 1** Circle your five lowest questions. That's your study list.
- 2** **Systems first.** Take one system a day. Draw it from memory, then check it against your own approved documents.
- 3** **Write your stories down.** Have one each for leadership, a decision, a technical failure and working with a new first officer.
- 4** **Say everything out loud.** Practise with a friend, a mirror or an AI voice assistant.
- 5** **Study the airline.** Use its own public careers pages and news. Check the minimum requirements against your logbook before you apply.
- 6** **Be honest.** "I'm not sure" is a professional answer.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FURTHER

The Airline Move Playbook

I'm writing it now: a systems study method, worked technical and leadership answers, a story bank, direct-entry interview examples, a contract checklist and a study planner. It's airline-neutral and contains nothing from any company's manuals or any authority's exams.

\$49 founding price for the first 30 pilots · \$79 after launch

[HEADINGCHANGE.COM/PLAYBOOK](https://headingchange.com/playbook)

No pressure. If this self-check helped on its own, that's a good result.

Captain Adi

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