Airspace + Airport Cheat Sheet

The 4-question flight decision

01 / FIND AIRSPACE	02 / SURFACE OR ABOVE?	03 / TEMPORARY RULES	04 / TRAFFIC CLUES
B solid blue, C solid magenta, D dashed blue, E surface dashed magenta, G open background.	If Class E starts at 700 or 1,200 ft AGL, a sub-400 ft drone flight is usually still in Class G.	Check NOTAMs/TFRs, wildfire activity, VIP movement, stadium events, runway closures, and chart notices.	Tower status, runway heading, CTAF, UNICOM, ATIS, and traffic calls tell you where manned aircraft may be.

Airspace classes: the line, the numbers, the drone answer

Line	Class	Altitude numbers	Drone answer + trap
	B Solid blue rings	100/30 = ceiling 10,000 / floor 3,000 ft MSL (hundreds of feet).	Authorization when the flight enters Class B. A flight below an elevated shelf is outside that shelf; check underlying airspace.
	C Solid magenta rings	Two tiers, e.g. 41/13 = 4,100 / 1,300 ft MSL.	Authorization when the flight enters Class C. Compare aircraft MSL with the shelf floor; check underlying airspace.
	D Dashed blue ring	Ceiling in a dashed box: [25] = 2,500 ft MSL. A minus, [-30], = up to but not including 3,000.	Controlled while the tower is open. Authorization required.
	E sfc Dashed magenta	Controlled from the ground up.	Airport surface area (E2): authorization. Surface extensions (E3/E4): no section 107.41 authorization by themselves. Verify designation and overlaps.
	E 700 Faded magenta	Floor 700 ft AGL. The soft / faded side marks the lower (700) floor.	A 0-400 ft AGL flight is below this layer. Check for overlapping surface airspace and other restrictions.
	E 1200 Faded blue	Blue vignette commonly marks a 1,200 ft AGL floor adjoining Class G. Other labeled floors exist.	A 0-400 ft AGL flight is below this layer. Check for overlapping surface airspace and other restrictions.
	G Open background	Surface up to the overlying Class E floor.	Uncontrolled. No ATC authorization, but Part 107 still applies.
	A Not on sectionals	18,000 ft MSL through FL600 inclusive. FL600 is a pressure flight level.	Outside ordinary Part 107 operations. Class E lies above FL600.

Sources: FAA CUG (9 Jul 2026), AIM 3-2/3-4, JO 7210.3 19-6-3, 14 CFR 107.41/.45/.51. Checked 13 Oct 2026.

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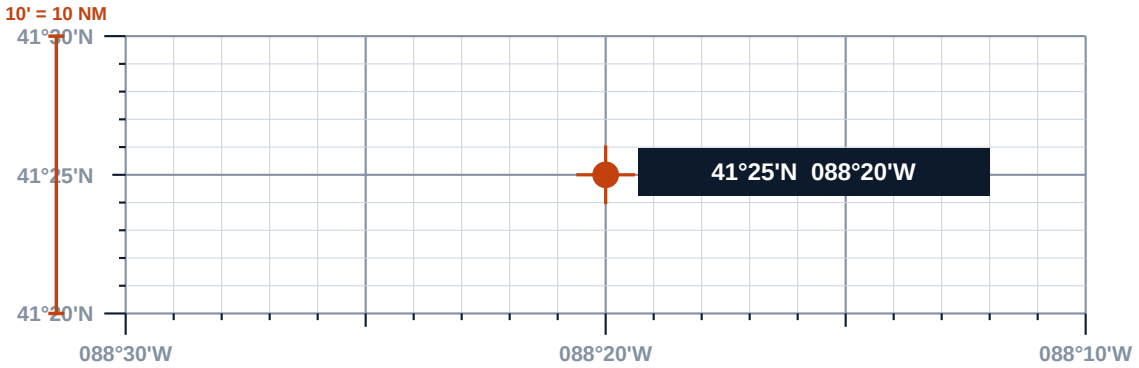
Latitude / longitude: read it from zero



Parallels = latitude (measure N / S).

Meridians = longitude (measure E / W).

Read latitude first; this example is N / W.

1 minute of latitude is about 1 nautical mile.

Use a latitude scale or the chart distance scale.

Each small tick = 1 minute (60 per degree).

Airport operations: traffic and radio clues

Clue	What it means for the test	Drone-pilot move
Blue airport symbol	Airport is depicted as towered. Check published hours and current NOTAMs.	Read the actual airspace volume. Airport color alone does not establish authorization.
Magenta airport symbol	Non-towered airport.	Monitor CTAF for traffic awareness; authorization depends on airspace, not color alone.
CTAF	Common Traffic Advisory Frequency. Manned pilots self-announce.	Listen for downwind, base, final, departure, and clear-of-runway calls.
UNICOM	Airport advisory station at some non-towered airports.	Useful context, not FAA authorization.
ATIS	Recorded weather, runway use, and airport notices at many towered fields.	Good situational awareness; does not replace LAANC.
Runway 18/36	Runway numbers approximate magnetic heading / 10.	Runway 18 = roughly southbound final; runway 36 = roughly northbound final.

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Radio + pattern calls	Obstructions + terrain	Special use + temporary rules
Downwind: parallel to runway, opposite landing direction. **Base**: turning toward final. **Final**: aligned with runway to land. **Left base runway 18**: aircraft is about to turn final for a southbound landing.	**1549 (612)**: top is 1,549 ft MSL; object is 612 ft AGL. **MEF**: quadrant elevation estimate in MSL, with source-error and applicable obstacle allowances before rounding. **Guy wires**: Wires can extend far from a tower and be hard to see. Plan a safe lateral margin.	**Restricted/prohibited**: check status and required using/controlling-agency permission under section 107.45. **MOA**: military training may occur. **NSA**: security-sensitive, avoid if requested. **TFR**: temporary flight restriction; check NOTAMs before every flight.

Six exam traps this sheet prevents

Dashed magenta != faded magenta Dashed = Class E surface. Faded = Class E at 700 ft AGL.	**Airport color != airspace class by itself** Blue airport means towered; read the active volume and Class E designation separately.	**MSL != AGL** Chart altitudes and obstacle top numbers are often MSL; the normal drone ceiling is 400 ft AGL, with a qualifying structure provision.
Radio is not permission Monitoring CTAF/ATIS improves awareness. B/C/D and airport surface E2 require authorization. LAANC or DroneZone is the request path.	**Charts age** Use current charts and check NOTAMs/TFRs for changes between chart cycles.	**Class G still has rules** No ATC authorization does not cancel VLOS, 400 ft AGL, visibility, and right-of-way rules.

Educational, not navigation or legal advice. Check current charts, NOTAMs/TFRs, the whole route and altitude range, and issued authorization conditions. Use LAANC where available or FAA DroneZone when authorization is required.

Primary references: FAA Chart Users' Guide, pp. 12-17 and 27; FAA Order JO 7210.3, 19-6-3, note 3 (Class E); 14 CFR 107.45 (restricted/prohibited); 14 CFR 107.51 (altitude).