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FAA Cross-Country Time Logbook: General, Rating, ATP Totals

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Executive Summary

A single cross-country column in a personal logbook cannot, on its own, reproduce the subtotal an FAA requirement asks for. In the United States, 14 CFR 61.1 (the electronic Code of Federal Regulations showed current text as of 29 October 2026) (www.ecfr.gov) defines cross-country time in separate paragraphs for separate purposes. The **general** paragraph needs a landing at another point. The paragraph for private, commercial and instrument experience needs a point of landing that is **more than 50 nautical miles (NM)** in straight-line distance from the **original** point of departure. The **aeroplane airline transport pilot (ATP)** paragraph asks for a flight at least that far from the original point of departure and states no landing element (www.ecfr.gov).

One flight can therefore be general cross-country time, fail the rating definition, and still count toward the ATP total. The FAA Chief Counsel wrote in 2009 that the ATP definition "does not require a landing" (www.faa.gov). The ATP certificate itself asks for **500 hours** of cross-country time under 61.159, but restricted pathways in 61.160 use **200 hours**, so a generic "500 hours" heading is not every applicant's requirement.

This report offers a purpose-labelled worksheet, tested on eight synthetic flights totalling **620 minutes**. The same flight set yields a General subtotal of **400 minutes**, a Rating subtotal of **75 minutes** and an ATP subtotal of **275 minutes**, with 140, 100 and 140 minutes left **unresolved** for missing route evidence or unaddressed roles. Those three subtotals sum to 750 minutes, more than the time flown, so they must never be added. Flight grouping follows the FAA's 2009 Van Zanen letter, which left the choice of what counts as a flight to the pilot when the flight is logged; the worksheet does not invent new historical regroupings. A safety-pilot conclusion from the Gebhart letter (www.faa.gov) is kept to its scope and is not extended to a required second in command.

Tools already vary. MyFlightbook documents a separate property for cross-country that went more than 50 NM without a landing beyond that threshold (myflightbook.com); ForeFlight says cross-country time may be logged regardless of distance (support.foreflight.com); a retailer listing of the ASA SP-6 paper logbook shows one cross-country item (www.mypilotstore.com). Pilots should preserve original entries, export a dated snapshot

and label every printed subtotal by purpose. Canada's 25 NM test (gazette.gc.ca) and European wording (www.legislation.gov.uk) are not US tests and are not borrowed. A pilot can test any logbook's sample export against this worksheet.

Introduction and Background

A logbook page that carries one **cross-country** column invites a simple belief: the number at the bottom is the number every form wants. For a United States (US) pilot documenting aeroplane experience under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 61, that belief is unsafe, because the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) defines cross-country time more than once and ties each definition to a purpose. The audience is the professional or hour-building pilot who must fill in an application or airline form and needs to know which subtotal the line asks for.

This report audits experience already flown; it does not plan routes or recommend ways to build hours. It asks one question: can a personal logbook's single cross-country column reproduce the subtotal requested by a particular FAA requirement? The short answer is no, not by itself. The same flight can satisfy the general definition, fail the definition used for private, commercial and instrument experience, and satisfy the definition used for airline transport pilot (ATP) experience. The report shows how to test that flight by flight, with labelled evidence and an explicit **unresolved** category.

Three conventions apply:

- **Jurisdiction:** every legal statement names its jurisdiction. This is the United States, 14 CFR Part 61, not Canada and not Europe.
- **Kind of material:** material is labelled as **regulation** (the eCFR text), **historical interpretation** (FAA Office of the Chief Counsel letters), **vendor documentation** (what a tool maker says about its own product) or **suggested worksheet fields** (this report's own proposal, which no authority has approved).
- **Synthetic cases:** the worked flights use abstract airport labels and stipulated distances, so no real-airport figure is invented.

Nothing here replaces the decision of the FAA office, designated examiner or employer that receives the record.

The Three FAA Purposes: Definition and Taxonomy

The current 14 CFR 61.1 text presents the definition of cross-country time as a list of paragraphs (i) through (vii), each for a different use. *Table 1* below summarizes the three paragraphs that matter for aeroplane records and notes the others a logbook may meet.

Purpose and clause (14 CFR 61.1, US)	Landing test	Distance test	Role and context	Evidence the record needs
General, paragraph (i): the default when time is not used for a purpose in (ii) to (vii)	A landing at a point other than the point of departure (www.ecfr.gov)	None stated	Flight by a certificate holder, in an aircraft, using a navigation method	Departure point, at least one different landing point, navigation method
Private, commercial, instrument (and recreational), paragraph (ii): aeronautical experience for those certificates and the instrument rating	A point of landing beyond the distance in the next column (www.ecfr.gov)	Straight-line distance of **more than 50 NM** from the **original** point of departure	Appropriate aircraft; the requirement itself (for example pilot in command) adds role limits	Original departure, each landing, a straight-line figure with its method
Airline transport pilot, non-rotorcraft, paragraph (vi): aeronautical experience for the ATP certificate	**No landing element is stated**	A flight at least a straight-line distance of **more than 50 NM** from the original point of departure (www.ecfr.gov)	Appropriate aircraft; role limits come from the specific ATP clause	Original departure and the farthest point reached, from a route or track record
Others: sport pilot (more than 25 NM), powered parachute (15 NM), rotorcraft (25 NM), military pilots qualifying for a commercial certificate (50 NM)	Varies by paragraph	As listed (www.ecfr.gov)	Outside this report's aeroplane focus	Not developed here

The first interpretive point is how the ATP row differs from the rating row. Paragraph (ii) asks for a flight "that includes a point of landing" beyond 50 NM; paragraph (vi) asks for a flight at least that far from the original point of departure and does not mention landing. The FAA Chief Counsel read it the same way in 2009, writing that the ATP definition "does not require a landing but only a flight that is at" that distance (www.faa.gov). The inference for a worksheet follows directly: an out-and-back flight that reaches beyond 50 NM and lands only at its departure airport can count for the ATP purpose while failing both the general and the rating definitions.

The second point is historical. The FAA's 1997 correction to its final rule stated that the definition "has been reorganized" into purpose-specific parts (www.govinfo.gov), and the same preamble keeps a landing requirement explicitly for the rotorcraft ATP case (www.govinfo.gov), which highlights that the aeroplane ATP paragraph omits one. A July 2013 final rule revised the definition again (www.govinfo.gov). The 1997 preamble also grandfathered ATP cross-country time logged before 4 August 1997 (www.govinfo.gov), a reminder to read very old entries against the rule in force when they were logged.

The third point is the general definition. The FAA Chief Counsel noted that the multiple definitions "apply differently" depending on how the time is used (www.faa.gov), and that the general paragraph governs when the time is not used toward a certificate or rating. A general total is a legitimate number on a logbook page; it is simply not the number a rating form requests.

Other jurisdictions are not borrowed

A pilot who flies in several countries meets different tests, and they do not transfer. Canada added a cross-country flight time definition to its Canadian Aviation Regulations in an amendment published in Canada Gazette Part II in December 2025: a flight following standard navigation procedures along a pre-planned route to a destination at least 25 NM from the point of departure (gazette.gc.ca). Transport Canada's regulatory impact statement also says cross-country flying is "a practice of tracking pre-planned routes, not diverting from them" (gazette.gc.ca), says there is "no requirement to complete the entire flight plan in order to log cross-country time" (gazette.gc.ca), and notes that the European definition "does not quantify a distance" (gazette.gc.ca). The European Part-FCL wording, as held in the UK-hosted 2014 version of Regulation 1178/2011, is "a flight between a point of departure and a point of arrival following a pre-planned route, using standard navigation procedures" (www.legislation.gov.uk), and that text leaves the logbook form to the competent authority (www.legislation.gov.uk).

The practical hazard is a stale or foreign explanation in search results. A Canadian article on aviationsolutions.net carries a banner saying the new definition "supersedes the information in this article" (www.aviationsolutions.net). That article was originally published in June 2017 (www.aviationsolutions.net) and said "The distance flown is irrelevant" (www.aviationsolutions.net), which describes the old Canadian practice and not any FAA test. A US worksheet should never import a 25 NM test, a pre-planned-route test or a European column heading. The FAA tests are the ones in *Table 1*.

Where Each Requirement Takes Its Total

A definition is only half of a requirement. Each aeronautical-experience clause adds its own hours, role and sometimes its own flight-specific distance, and a column labelled "cross-country" cannot carry those variations.

Private pilot, instrument rating and commercial pilot (US, aeroplane)

These clauses use the paragraph (ii) definition for hour counts, but several add distance rules that are not the 61.1 test.

- **Private pilot, 14 CFR 61.109:** the clause lists a solo flight of 150 NM total distance (www.ecfr.gov) and a 50 NM leg measured between takeoff and landing locations, a different measurement from distance to the original point of departure.
- **Instrument rating, 14 CFR 61.65:** the hour requirement is cross-country time **as pilot in command** (www.ecfr.gov), so a second-in-command entry cannot meet it even when the flight qualifies. That is the standard pathway: 61.65(g) lets an applicant for a combined private pilot certificate with an instrument rating credit up to 45 hours of cross-country time performing the duties of pilot in command with an authorized instructor (47 hours for an instrument-helicopter rating).
- **Commercial pilot, 14 CFR 61.129:** the day and night two-hour flights use a straight-line distance of more than 100 NM from the original point of departure (www.ecfr.gov), while the long flight is stated as 300 NM total distance.

A rating total built from the 61.1(ii) test can therefore still miss a clause that measures distance differently. The worksheet records the clause being tested, not only a subtotal.

Airline transport pilot (US, aeroplane)

For an aeroplane category and class rating, 14 CFR 61.159(a) asks for 1,500 hours of total time as a pilot including **500 hours of cross-country time** (www.ecfr.gov). Inside the separate block of 250 hours as pilot in command, or as second in command performing the duties of pilot in command under supervision, it requires at least **100 hours of cross-country time** (www.ecfr.gov). These are two different subtotals taken from overlapping flights, and the second has a role filter the first does not.

Not every applicant meets the same figure. Section 61.160 provides restricted-privilege pathways in which a person "may apply for an airline transport pilot certificate with 200 hours of cross-country time" (www.ecfr.gov). A generic "500 hours" heading in a software summary or an employer's minimums list is therefore not every applicant's requirement. One regional carrier's public hiring page lists "500 hours of cross country" for ATP holders and 200 for restricted-ATP holders as a single category with no distance qualifier (www.skywest.com).

Second in command, safety pilots and required crew

Who may log the time is a separate question from where the aircraft flew. The FAA Chief Counsel's 2009 Gebhart letter concerned an instrument-rating applicant and concluded that a person acting as safety pilot for part of a flight may not log cross-country time for that flight, because a safety pilot does not conduct the entire flight (www.faa.gov). The later Glenn letter (1 December 2009) applied that reasoning to the 61.65(d), 61.109 and 61.129 requirements, noting that the rationale is that one pilot gains the experience (www.faa.gov). It did not extend the safety-pilot conclusion to the ATP clause in 61.159.

For required crew the same letter went the other way. In its third scenario, a part 135 operation that requires two pilots, it found the definition "does not limit that time to only a PIC" (www.faa.gov), so a second in command who is a required crewmember for the entire flight may log cross-country time. The same letter's final scenario reached the opposite result where only one flight crewmember was required and two pilots alternated at the controls: neither pilot could log cross-country time to meet 61.65(d), 61.109 or 61.129. F8's result therefore turns on the stipulation of a required crew. This report applies that reasoning only to a stipulated flight in which two pilots are required by the type certificate and the logger qualifies under 14 CFR 61.51(f) (www.ecfr.gov). Whether a particular airline second-in-command entry meets that test is for the receiving authority.

Building the Evidence Inventory

An audit needs inputs that survive a second reader. The general recording rule is that 14 CFR 61.51(a) requires a person to document and record aeronautical experience "in a manner acceptable to the Administrator" (www.ecfr.gov), and the entry list in 61.51(b) includes the location where the aircraft departed and arrived (www.ecfr.gov). The 61.51(b) entries quoted here name no dedicated cross-country field. The cross-country subtotal is therefore a computed result, not a recorded fact, and the record has to keep the inputs that produce it.

Suggested worksheet fields (this report's proposal, not an FAA form)

No authority has approved these fields, and a receiving office may want something different.

- **Flight ID and date:** a stable identifier that survives export and re-import.
- **Original point of departure:** as originally recorded, not of a later regrouping.
- **Actual route and landings:** every field where the aircraft touched down, in order.
- **Straight-line distance, with source and method:** distance from the original departure to the farthest relevant point or landing, how it was obtained (chart plot, planning tool, track log) and its rounding.
- **Navigation basis:** dead reckoning, pilotage, electronic navigation aids, radio aids or other systems.
- **Flight grouping as originally recorded:** legs logged as one flight or several.
- **Role basis:** pilot in command, second in command, safety pilot or dual received, with the clause that permits the entry.
- **Recorded minutes**, and **eligible minutes per purpose** in separate columns, with a status of eligible, not eligible or **unresolved** and the reason.

Original departure and flight grouping

The FAA has said the phrase "original point of departure" is "not specifically defined" in its rules (www.faa.gov), so the worksheet records it explicitly. In the 2009 Van Zanen letter the Chief Counsel considered a three-leg day: Airport A to B, 20 NM south; B to C, 60 NM north; C back to A, 40 NM. Logged as segments of one flight, no cross-country time could be logged because no segment includes a landing more than 50 NM from the original point of departure (www.faa.gov). The letter confirmed that no single leg must exceed 50 NM and that legs may be strung together as one flight (www.faa.gov). It added that nothing dictates how separate flights must be logged, so a pilot may "choose what is considered a flight and what is merely a segment of a flight" (www.faa.gov).

The scope is narrow: the letter addressed the 2009 numbering (then 61.1(b)(3)(ii)) and the landing-based test, which corresponds to paragraph (ii) today. The Glenn letter repeated the grouping point for 61.65(d) and 61.129 but found the scenario inapplicable to 61.159 because the ATP definition does not require a landing. Both letters describe logging "appropriately when the flight is conducted" (www.faa.gov). A worksheet auditing past entries should take the grouping originally recorded and test it, not invent a new historical split of a day's legs to create eligibility. Whether a later regrouping would be accepted is not answered by the letters read here, so it belongs in the unresolved category.

Status of the interpretations

The FAA index page states that interpretations are now available in a separate database and shows no per-letter status notice (www.faa.gov). No withdrawal of the Van Zanen or Gebhart letters was found in the sources read, and later FAA letters cited Gebhart: Glenn in 2009 and a 2013 letter on pilot-in-command logging (www.faa.gov). That is evidence the letters were still relied on, not proof they are current. A university library's interpretation bibliography lists Gebhart under "Logging Cross-Country Flight Time in Safety Pilot Scenarios" (academicflight.com). A pilot should read each letter against current 61.1 text, and the receiving office has the last word.

A Worked Classification Worksheet (Hypothetical Example)

Table 2 below applies the three purposes to **eight synthetic flights** drawn up for this report. All are hypothetical. The stipulations are:

- **Aircraft, navigation and certificate:** every flight is in an appropriate aeroplane, uses a qualifying navigation method, and the logger holds a pilot certificate.
- **Distances:** straight-line figures are supplied as stipulations; no real airport pair is implied.
- **Role:** the logger is pilot in command except where the role column says otherwise. F8's second in command is stipulated to be a required crewmember, not to be performing the duties of pilot in command under supervision.
- **Rating column:** it applies the 61.1(ii) test and the pilot-in-command filter of the instrument-rating hour requirement in 61.65(d) as the example clause, so a second-in-command entry shows as not eligible there.
- **Cell format:** each cell shows a status and minutes. No qualified reviewer has validated these classifications, and one should before any are relied on.

ID	Route and distance evidence	Role and grouping	Min	General (i)	Rating (ii) + PIC filter	ATP (vi)	Uncertainty
F1	A to B, landing at B; B is 30 NM from A (chart plot)	PIC; one flight	50	**Yes** 50	No 0	No 0	Low: both tests clear
F2	A out to a turn point 60 NM from A, return, landing only at A; track log shows farthest point	PIC; one flight	80	No 0	No 0	**Yes** 80	Medium: relies on the reading that the farthest point reached defines the flight's distance
F3	A to C, landing at C; C is 60 NM from A (flight-planning tool)	PIC; one flight	75	**Yes** 75	**Yes** 75	**Yes** 75	Low
F4	A to D, landing at D; D is exactly 50.0 NM from A, to the stated precision	PIC; one flight	45	**Yes** 45	No 0	No 0	High if the 50.0 came from a rounded source: "more than 50" is not met at 50
F5	A to B (40 NM from A), then B to C (C is 25 NM from A); path length 80 NM; landings at B and C	PIC; recorded as one flight	110	**Yes** 110	No 0	No 0	Medium: the 80 NM path is not a straight-line distance from A
F6	Departure A logged; route and arrival blank; no track log	PIC; grouping unknown	100	Unresolved 100	Unresolved 100	Unresolved 100	High: no route evidence, so no purpose can be tested
F7	A to C, landing at C, C is 60 NM from A; logger was safety pilot for 40 of 90 minutes, logged as 40 minutes of PIC	Safety pilot for part of the flight	40	Unresolved 40	No 0	Unresolved 40	High: the safety-pilot letters were written for rating clauses; none read addresses 61.159

ID	Route and distance evidence	Role and grouping	Min	General (i)	Rating (ii) + PIC filter	ATP (vi)	Uncertainty
F8	A to C, landing at C, C is 60 NM from A; two pilots required by the type certificate	Required SIC for the whole flight, qualified under 61.51(f)	120	**Yes** 120	No 0 (not PIC)	**Yes** 120	Medium: depends on the receiving office accepting the SIC reading
Eligible				**400**	**75**	**275**	
Unresolved				140	100	140	
Not eligible				80	445	205	
Recorded total			**620**	620	620	620	

The table shows several things that no single column can. F2 is the case the research question is about: it is excluded from the general and rating columns because it never lands at a different point or lands beyond 50 NM, yet it is included in the ATP column because the ATP paragraph asks for a flight reaching more than 50 NM and no landing. The MyFlightbook documentation describes the same category as "Time spent in cross-country flight that went more than 50nm but did NOT land beyond that threshold" (myflightbook.com). F3 passes everything. F1 and F4 fail the distance tests for different reasons, one by a wide margin and one by exactly the boundary, and the rule says "more than 50". F5 is the multi-leg trap: a 40 NM plus 40 NM path is not automatically an 80 NM straight-line distance, and here the stipulated final landing is only 25 NM from the original departure. F6 is the missing-evidence case and stays unknown rather than being guessed. F7 and F8 share the same route but differ by role: Gebhart concerns a safety pilot present for part of a flight (www.faa.gov), while the Glenn letter finds that a required crewmember for the whole flight may log the time (www.faa.gov).

Reproducing separate totals without adding them

All subtotals come from the same eight flights. General eligible is 50 + 75 + 45 + 110 + 120 = 400 minutes (6 hours 40 minutes); Rating eligible is 75 minutes (1 hour 15 minutes); ATP eligible is 80 + 75 + 120 = 275 minutes (4 hours 35 minutes). Each column plus its unresolved and not-eligible rows reconciles to the recorded 620 minutes (10 hours 20 minutes). Adding the three eligible subtotals gives 750 minutes, more than the 620 actually flown, which is why purpose columns must never be summed.

The unresolved row gives a range: if every unresolved item were confirmed, the ATP subtotal could rise from 275 to 415 minutes. For the 100-hour pilot-in-command block in 61.159(a)(5)(i), the same ATP definition applies but the role filter excludes F8, because the F8 stipulation says only that the second in command was required and does not say the second in command was performing the duties of pilot in command under the supervision of a pilot in command, so the eligible total over F1 to F7 would be F2 plus F3 = 155 minutes, with F6 and F7 unresolved. Two ATP subtotals from one flight set can differ.

Handling the F2 reading

The ATP paragraph speaks of a flight "at least a straight-line distance of more than 50 nautical miles from the original point of departure". The text does not say whether that is measured to the farthest point reached, a turn point or any waypoint, and the Glenn letter does not define the measuring point. This worksheet adopts the farthest point reached from the original departure as a **suggested convention**, a reading and not a rule. A pilot relying on F2-type entries for an ATP application should confirm with the receiving FAA office and keep the track log as evidence.

How Logbook Tools Handle the Split

The research question is whether existing tools can support the worksheet, and the documentation shows that some already do part of it. *Table 3* below compares what each tool's own pages say about cross-country fields and about distance or ATP-specific handling. It reflects vendor documentation read on 1 November 2026, not hands-on testing, and it cannot show what a product does in a screen or release that its public pages do not describe.

Tool or method	Cross-country fields documented	Distance or ATP-specific handling documented	Export and preserving entries
MyFlightbook (electronic)	A generic hours field defined as "Number of hours of cross-country flight time" (myflightbook.com)	A separate property, "Cross-Country Time over 50nm (No Landing)" (myflightbook.com), described for non-rotorcraft ATP use (myflightbook.com); the vendor blog says ATP rules "allow for cross-country time if you go over 50nm but a landing is not required" (myflightbookblog.blogspot.com); the FAQ tells users to put flights beyond 50 NM from the original departure in the Cross Country field (myflightbook.com)	CSV re-import keyed on a flight identifier; without it, import "will create new flights, which will lead to duplicates" (myflightbook.com)
ForeFlight (electronic)	Cross-country time can be logged "regardless of the distance flown" (support.foreflight.com); import template has one duration column (support.foreflight.com)	An optional Distance field; the template says it can track total route distance or distance to the furthest landing (support.foreflight.com); the vendor warns that rules may impose a distance (support.foreflight.com); the guide describes the field as a straight-line departure-to-destination measure (cloudfront.foreflight.com); the cited ForeFlight pages document no ATP-specific field	Custom fields are carried in the CSV; hiding standard fields does not delete their data (cloudfront.foreflight.com)
LogTen Pro (electronic)	Cross-country hours are tracked (logten.com)	Smart Groups for ATP minimums are advertised (logten.com) but the page read gives no definition or distance rule	Users can create their own custom fields (logten.com); basic totals including Cross Country are shown by aircraft type (coradine.com)

Tool or method	Cross-country fields documented	Distance or ATP-specific handling documented	Export and preserving entries
Paper logbooks (for example ASA SP-6, Jeppesen Professional)	A retailer's listing of the SP-6 columns shows one cross-country item (www.mypilotstore.com) ; the Jeppesen listing likewise (www.mypilotstore.com)	No separate ATP or over-50 NM column appears in those listings; ASA says its columns are flexible enough for pilots to customize (asa2fly.com), as does Sporty's for blank columns on another logbook (www.sportys.com)	The original page is the record; a pilot adds purpose columns on a separate worksheet
Pilot Logbook (electronic, invitation-only; the publisher's product)	Per the vendor's product page, cross-country appears among the totals a pilot can track	The page read documents no distance-based or ATP-specific cross-country calculation, so the worksheet in this report is the method it would be checked against	Vendor-described print layouts (including an FAA layout) and data export; not independently verified

Table 3 shows that tools differ less in whether they store a cross-country number than in whether they preserve the facts needed to recompute it. MyFlightbook is explicit that ATP-type cross-country is a separate category, so a claim that software cannot represent the split would be wrong. Its blog says the ATP progress report uses the larger of the two values per flight (myflightbookblog.blogspot.com) and that it is "cleanest if you are careful not to log in both places" (myflightbookblog.blogspot.com), a double-counting caution the worksheet formalizes. The vendor's FAQ links FAA guidance, saying "There is an interpretation from the FAA" (myflightbook.com), and says its mobile apps can fill the Cross Country field automatically for routes whose airports are more than 50 NM apart (myflightbook.com). A pilot should check such automation against the worksheet.

Where Pilot Logbook fits

Pilot Logbook is an invitation-only electronic logbook made by a line pilot; a pilot can request an invite from the publisher, as there is no open sign-up. This report has no independent evidence of the product's capability and does not rely on the publisher's feature claims: it notes only that the vendor describes cross-country as a tracked value, with print layouts and data export. It makes no claim that the product classifies flights under any FAA paragraph, and no authority approves a layout. A sensible use is as a data store and print tool. A pilot would check whether a sample export carries route, original departure, landings and role for each flight, then run the worksheet over it. The same test applies to paper, MyFlightbook, ForeFlight or LogTen Pro.

Evaluating a sample summary or export

1. **Name the receiving authority and requirement,** for example "FAA, ATP airplane, 61.159(a)(1)".
2. **Match the clause to the paragraph of 61.1** using *Table 1*.
3. **Check the inputs:** route, original departure, landings, role and minutes per flight.
4. **Recompute the subtotal** with the worksheet over the same flight set and compare it with the logbook's own total.
5. **Record the gap:** list unresolved flights and why, and keep the original entries unchanged.

Preserving Original Entries When the Purpose Changes

A lifetime cross-country total is a historical entry. Replacing it with a recomputed number for one application erases the basis for the next, so the original stays and layers are added around it.

- **Never overwrite the original column.** Leave the generic value as logged and add purpose columns beside it or in a copy.
- **Export a dated snapshot before editing.** It is the proof of what was originally recorded.
- **Use a stable flight identifier.** MyFlightbook's FAQ explains that without the exported identifier, re-import creates duplicates (myflightbook.com).
- **Add fields, do not delete them.** ForeFlight states that hiding standard fields does not delete their data (cloudfront.foreflight.com).
- **Keep the evidence with the entry,** such as a plotted route or track log. Missing evidence stays **unknown**; it is not converted into a yes or a no.
- **Label every printed subtotal by purpose,** for example "ATP cross-country (14 CFR 61.1(vi), US)".

A stored purpose label lets a past subtotal be understood after a definition changes, as Canada's did in December 2025 (www.aviationsolutions.net).

Data Analysis and Evidence

Requirement figures (US, aeroplane, as of 29 October 2026)

The hour requirements are those cited in the requirements section: 500 hours of cross-country time for an ATP aeroplane certificate, 100 of them inside a 250-hour pilot-in-command block, 200 on restricted pathways, and 50 hours as pilot in command for an instrument rating on the standard pathway (61.65(g) allows a combined private/instrument credit). Commercial pilot applicants need 50 hours of cross-country flight, at least 10 of them in aeroplanes, and private pilot applicants 5 hours of solo cross-country time, in each case with the clause-specific distance flights described earlier.

Worked-case proportions

Over the 620 recorded minutes, the General subtotal is 400 minutes, **64.5 percent** of recorded time. The Rating subtotal is 75 minutes, **12.1 percent**, and the ATP subtotal is 275 minutes, **44.4 percent**. Unresolved time is 140 minutes (22.6 percent) for General and ATP and 100 minutes (16.1 percent) for Rating. These describe eight invented flights, not pilots in general.

Sensitivity to the boundary

A stated distance of 50 NM can mean exactly 50.0, a rounding of a value from 49.5 to under 50.5, or a truncation. The rule requires "more than 50", so only a measured value above 50.0 qualifies. The suggested handling is to store distance to one decimal place with its source and to mark any whole-number figure within 1 NM of the threshold as unresolved. A departure-to-destination distance field cannot settle F2-type cases without route data.

What is not measured here

No sample of real pilot logbooks was analysed, and no published benchmark of error rates in cross-country subtotals was found.

Implications and Future Directions

- **For pilots:** the cross-country number is a function of purpose, not a property of a flight. A purpose-labelled worksheet with preserved originals serves an ATP application better than one lifetime total. A hiring page may list "500 hours of cross country" without saying which definition it expects (www.skywest.com), so the applicant should ask what the employer or FAA office means and record the answer.
- **For logbook makers:** MyFlightbook's documentation shows a distinct ATP no-landing property is feasible. Other products document a distance field or custom fields that could carry a purpose label, though the pages read describe no ATP-specific total. Distance, original-departure and landing evidence in an export lets a pilot reproduce a subtotal independently. That is a data-model point, not a claim about any product's accuracy.
- **For regulatory change:** the eCFR text is amended continuously, so the display date belongs on every worksheet. Interpretation letters are historical documents whose status should be rechecked before reliance. Other jurisdictions revise their own definitions (gazette.gc.ca).
- **For method:** the unresolved category turns missing route evidence into a visible task instead of a silent guess.

Limits of this report: the worked classifications are unvalidated, the F2 convention is a suggested reading, and the interpretation letters are quoted from scanned copies that may contain transcription errors.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do I log cross-country time for an FAA application?

Record each flight's route, original departure, landings, role and minutes, then compute the subtotal for the specific clause. Section 61.51 lists departure and arrival locations among required entries.

What is the FAA definition of cross-country time in 14 CFR 61.1?

It has several paragraphs: the general one needs a landing at another point, the rating-purpose one needs a landing more than 50 NM from the original departure, and the aeroplane ATP one needs a flight more than 50 NM from the original departure (*Table 1*).

Does the 50 NM requirement need a landing?

For private, commercial and instrument experience, yes, the paragraph says "a point of landing". For ATP experience the FAA Chief Counsel wrote that the paragraph "does not require a landing".

What cross-country time does an ATP certificate require?

For an aeroplane category and class rating, 500 hours under 61.159, with 100 hours inside the pilot-in-command block; restricted pathways in 61.160 allow 200 hours. Check the applicant's own pathway before using a generic heading.

How much cross-country time do I need for a private pilot certificate or an instrument rating?

Private: 5 hours of solo cross-country time within the solo requirement and a 150 NM solo flight. Instrument: 50 hours of cross-country time as pilot in command, of which 10 hours must be in an aeroplane, except that 61.65(g) lets a combined private/instrument applicant credit up to 45 hours of cross-country time performing the duties of pilot in command with an authorized instructor. Read the clause for the exact rating.

What columns do pilot logbooks have for cross-country?

A retailer listing for the Jeppesen Professional Logbook shows a single cross-country item (www.mypilotstore.com). Some electronic tools add distance or no-landing fields.

What counts as cross-country time under FAA rules?

It depends on purpose, and a role limit may apply. A safety pilot present for only part of a flight was treated differently in the Gebhart interpretation for instrument-rating experience.

Can I use Canada's 25 NM test or a European definition?

No. Canada's 25 NM test and the European definition without a distance belong to those jurisdictions. A US record uses 14 CFR 61.1.

Conclusion

A single cross-country column cannot, by itself, reproduce the subtotal requested by a particular FAA requirement. The United States uses purpose-specific definitions in 14 CFR 61.1: a general one that needs a landing elsewhere, a rating-purpose one that needs a landing more than 50 NM from the original departure, and an aeroplane ATP one that needs a flight more than 50 NM from the original departure without a stated landing. The same flight can therefore be in one subtotal and out of another, and the role rules in each clause add a second filter.

The worksheet in this report handles that by recording evidence per flight, classifying each flight separately for each purpose, and keeping an explicit unresolved category for missing routes, uncertain roles and boundary distances. Subtotals are computed over the same flight set and are never added together. Original entries stay unchanged, with dated exports and stable identifiers as the audit trail. Interpretation letters inform the grouping and role questions only within their stated scope, and whether a letter is still current is for the pilot and the receiving office to confirm.

Existing tools already differ in how much of this they support: at least one documents a distinct ATP no-landing property, others offer distance fields or custom fields, and paper logbooks leave the work to the pilot. Whichever record a pilot keeps, the method depends on a check of what a sample export contains. The final answer to any individual classification rests with the FAA office, examiner or employer that receives the record.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

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How it works

Work starts with discovery of the operator's workflows, continues with iterative development alongside the operator's team, and includes integration with the tools already in use and ongoing support.

Its own tools

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