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IFR vs Actual Instrument Time Logbook: FAA and EASA Audit

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Executive Summary

A heading that says "IFR" or "Instrument" on a printed logbook report does not, by itself, tell a professional pilot what was measured. Under the United States rule, 14 CFR 61.51(g)(1), instrument time may be logged only for flight time when the person operates the aircraft solely by reference to instruments under actual or simulated instrument flight conditions (www.law.cornell.edu). Under the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Part-FCL, four related definitions coexist in FCL.010: instrument flight time, instrument ground time, instrument time (which is instrument flight time or instrument ground time), and flight time under instrument flight rules (IFR) (www.easa.europa.eu). The sample logbook instructions in AMC1 FCL.050 then ask for night or IFR flight time in a single operational-condition column (www.easa.europa.eu). Those are different measurements, and none of them is aircraft duration.

That is why two reports built from one flight can show different instrument-looking totals while total flight duration stays the same. One report may print the flight-rules figure, another the person's qualifying instrument minutes, and a third a configured combination. A CrewLounge support article dated 18 November 2020 (about six years old, so current behaviour should be confirmed with the vendor) documents a print option that places IFR and Actual Instrument values in one shared column and states that stored hours remain unchanged when the option is cleared (support.crewlounge.aero). LogTen's support article, dated 5 May 2026, documents IFR and Actual Instrument as separate fields with different regional uses (support.logten.com), and ForeFlight's import template lists IFR, ActualInstrument and SimulatedInstrument as three separate duration fields (support.foreflight.com).

This report supplies a vendor-neutral worksheet: a definition-to-field matrix, a one-row-per-flight mapping test, and provenance labels (pilot-entered, imported, inferred, suggested) that are recommended audit metadata rather than legal requirements. A synthetic fixture (Hypothetical Example) shows why adding overlapping categories gives a meaningless number: a 120-minute IFR flight with 20 independently verified qualifying actual-instrument minutes yields 140 if the two are added, which is neither the flight's duration nor an instrument total. Vendor field models are described from their own documentation (myflightbook.com), and the FAA text was current as displayed on the eCFR with Title 14 last amended on 15 October 2026 (www.ecfr.gov).

The practical conclusions are three. Read the report's jurisdiction and purpose before its column heading. Never add IFR, actual and simulated figures into aircraft time. And when a figure looks wrong, change the report configuration or ask for the definition, rather than deleting source records. The scope is the meaning and preservation of logged durations only, not instrument recency, simulator credit, or any authority's decision on eligibility.

Introduction and Background

Professional pilots keep personal logbooks for several audiences: a licensing authority, an examiner, an employer, and themselves. A pilot who holds, or is preparing records for, both United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and EASA purposes will meet two vocabularies. The FAA rule speaks of "actual" and "simulated" instrument conditions. The EASA sample logbook has an "operational condition" column holding night and IFR time. Electronic logbooks sit between them, and each product chooses its own field names.

This report is a semantic comparison. It asks what a logged duration represents under the label IFR, Instrument or Actual Instrument, and whether that meaning survives an import, an export and a print layout. It is not a paper-to-digital migration checklist, an instrument currency analysis, or a guide to simulator credit.

Every legal statement names its jurisdiction: the FAA material concerns the United States, and the EASA material concerns the European Union framework, with no conclusion drawn for any other authority. The report separates **law** (the regulation text), **acceptable means of compliance** (EASA's AMC), **national procedure**, **vendor documentation**, and **suggested worksheet fields** (this report's own recommendations). Vendor documents are dated instructions, not tests of current software behaviour; no hands-on round-trip or data-loss benchmark was run.

Four terms recur. "IFR" means instrument flight rules, the regime under which a flight is operated. "Actual instrument" means reference to instruments in conditions requiring it. "Simulated instrument" means reference to instruments with the outside view limited. "Aircraft time" means the duration of the flight itself. A logbook can hold all four for the same flight.

Key Differences in What "Instrument" Records

FAA 61.51(g) ties instrument time to the person's operation, not to the flight plan

The FAA logbook rule requires each person to enter specified information for each flight or lesson logged (www.ecfr.gov), including total flight time or lesson time (www.ecfr.gov). The conditions of flight are separate entries. In the text read here, the list names day or night, actual instrument, simulated instrument and night vision goggle use as separate categories, with "actual instrument" its own item (www.ecfr.gov). Simulated instrument conditions may occur in flight, a full flight simulator, a flight training device, or an aviation training device (www.ecfr.gov).

The operative instrument-time rule is paragraph (g)(1). A person may log instrument time only for flight time when the person operates the aircraft solely by reference to instruments, under actual or simulated instrument flight conditions (www.law.cornell.edu). The test concerns what the person did, and the rule text read here

does not mention an IFR flight plan or clearance as a condition. Cornell's Legal Information Institute carries the same wording but shows no explicit as-of date, so it is a convenience copy.

Paragraph (g)(2) adds an instructor provision: an authorized instructor may log instrument time when conducting instrument flight instruction in actual instrument flight conditions (www.ecfr.gov). The same flight can therefore generate different instrument entries for two people in the cockpit. This report gives no universal instruction for first officers or relief crew; those are verification questions for the governing requirement and the receiving authority or examiner.

FAA material shows the IFR-versus-instrument distinction at work. FAA Information for Operators (InFO) 15012 describes a flight filed under IFR but accomplished in visual flight conditions (www.faa.gov), and an IFR training flight conducted under visual flight rules (www.faa.gov). Simulated conditions in an aircraft involve a view-limiting device (www.faa.gov). These are cited only to show that "IFR" and "instrument time" are separable, not for recency. Separately, "IFR conditions" in 14 CFR 1.1 is a weather definition: conditions below the minimums for flight under visual flight rules (www.ecfr.gov).

EASA FCL.010 defines four related but separate terms

EASA publishes Part-FCL (flight crew licensing) inside Commission Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011, and its Easy Access Rules consolidate the text. For this report, the in-force wording was read from the online Easy Access Rules publication, revision August 2023, where the definitions carry an amendment tag of Regulation (EU) 2021/2227. EASA's online publication page states that its published date is the date the consolidated version was generated (www.easa.europa.eu), and the document library lists an October 2026 revision published on 16 October 2026 (www.easa.europa.eu). The definitions below are quoted from the August 2023 revision and were not compared line by line with the October 2026 revision. That revision lists Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/781 of 8 April 2026 and EASA ED Decision 2026/006/R, the latter titled "Update of the flight simulation training device requirements", and this report did not retrieve the amending text to check whether FCL.010 changed. Readers should therefore confirm the wording, especially the instrument ground time definition that refers to flight simulation training devices, against the current consolidated text before relying on any record.

The definitions are:

- **Instrument flight time:** the time during which a pilot is controlling an aircraft in flight solely by reference to instruments (www.easa.europa.eu).
- **Instrument ground time:** the time during which a pilot is receiving instruction in simulated instrument flight in a flight simulation training device (www.easa.europa.eu).
- **Instrument time:** instrument flight time or instrument ground time (www.easa.europa.eu).
- **Flight time under instrument flight rules (IFR):** all flight time during which the aircraft is being operated under the Instrument Flight Rules (www.easa.europa.eu).

The first and fourth entries differ in kind: one turns on the pilot controlling the aircraft by reference to instruments, the other on the flight rules of the operation. A flight can be entirely under IFR while a given pilot controls the aircraft by reference to instruments for only part of it. EASA instrument time therefore does not

simply mean every IFR minute, and every crew member does not automatically earn the same instrument time. Each purpose, role and governing requirement needs its own source.

EASA AMC1 FCL.050 instructs an IFR operational-condition column

FCL.050 requires the pilot to keep a reliable record of the details of all flights flown, in a form and manner established by the competent authority (www.easa.europa.eu). The acceptable means of compliance, AMC1 FCL.050, then lists the data. Among them are operational conditions, namely whether the operation takes place at night or is conducted under instrument flight rules (www.easa.europa.eu). The instructions for use of the sample logbook tell the pilot to enter, in column 9, flight time undertaken at night or under instrument flight rules if applicable (www.easa.europa.eu). The same layout appears in the original December 2011 issue (www.easa.europa.eu).

Instrument flight time appears elsewhere in the same AMC. The remarks column (column 12) is discretionary, but the AMC lists entries that should always be made, and the first of these is instrument flight time undertaken as part of the training for a licence or rating (www.easa.europa.eu). Within the EASA framework, the column-9 IFR entry and the instrument-flight-time remark are therefore distinct records serving distinct purposes. A report printing one does not thereby print the other.

This is an acceptable means of compliance and a sample, not a statute. Because the rule delegates form and manner to the competent authority, national guidance matters for electronic logbooks. The Irish Aviation Authority, for example, states in its advisory memorandum PLAM 024 (revision of 24 August 2023) that electronic logbooks are acceptable provided any flights requiring endorsement are signed (www.iaa.ie). That is national procedure for one member state and should not be generalised.

Vendors choose their own field models, and the names overlap

Electronic logbooks must map these distinctions into a data model. The documented examples show several approaches, and none is a regulatory statement.

ForeFlight's logbook import template defines three separate duration fields: IFR, described as flight under Instrument Flight Rules (support.foreflight.com); ActualInstrument, described as duration in actual instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) (support.foreflight.com); and SimulatedInstrument, described as duration with a view-limiting device, or "hood" (support.foreflight.com). ForeFlight's European-region announcement, dated 3 December 2025, describes renamed fields reflecting European terminology such as Co-Pilot, IFR and PICUS (foreflight.com), and a new FCL.050-style report template for selectable date ranges (foreflight.com). ForeFlight's blog states that under its FAA region instrument time is logged when the pilot is flying solely by reference to instruments (foreflight.com), and describes its European region as logging instrument time whenever the flight is conducted under IFR (foreflight.com). That is a description of the product's field. The EASA text keeps instrument flight time and flight time under IFR as separate definitions, so a pilot should read the vendor sentence as product behaviour, not as a restatement of the regulation.

LogTen documents IFR and Actual Inst as two separate fields. It describes Actual Inst as time flying in instrument meteorological conditions (support.logten.com) that appears in an "Actual Instrument" or "Instrument" column in many US logbook styles (support.logten.com), while IFR appears in the "IFR" or

"Instrument" column of many European logbook styles (support.logten.com). The word "Instrument" therefore heads different columns in different styles. LogTen's iOS documentation adds an IFR flight toggle that auto-fills the IFR field with total time (intercom.help).

MyFlightbook's import reference defines an IMC column for hours in actual instrument conditions (myflightbook.com) and a separate optional IFR Time property for time under instrument flight rules, whether or not in IMC (myflightbook.com). FlightLogger documents a single optional instrument time log covering a hood, foggles or any other device (help.flightlogger.net).

CrewLounge's 20 November 2020 explanation separates the layers. It describes VMC and IMC as external weather conditions (support.crewlounge.aero), VFR and IFR as the regulations under which the flight is planned and accepted by air traffic control (support.crewlounge.aero), and warns that IFR is not linked to actual weather conditions (support.crewlounge.aero).

Why two reports can differ without any change in flight duration

Taken together, the sources identify at least five independent reasons for different instrument-looking totals on the same underlying flights:

- **Different quantity under one heading.** The heading "Instrument" may show flight-rules time in one style and qualifying instrument operation in another (support.logten.com).
- **Combined display.** A print option can place two stored fields into one column. CrewLounge's article dated 18 November 2020 documents a checkbox, "Print IFR and Actual Instrument in same column", on its Logbook Format page, states that both values are then summed in that column, and says the hours in the database remain unchanged (support.crewlounge.aero).
- **Region switching without field migration.** ForeFlight's blog notes that IFR time previously logged using Actual or Simulated Instrument fields or a custom field will not carry over automatically to the European-region IFR field (foreflight.com), while its enhancement page states that switching to the Europe region does not delete or alter existing logbook data (foreflight.com).
- **Hidden or empty columns.** LogTen states that even if data is not displayed, it is still saved (support.logten.com), and ForeFlight notes that time-based columns with zero reported hours display as empty (foreflight.com). A blank is not evidence of absence; it may mean zero, unknown, or hidden.
- **Different receiving form.** As described above, FAA 61.51 lists conditions of flight such as actual and simulated instrument, while AMC1 FCL.050 lists operational conditions, namely night or IFR, so the two layouts ask for different things.

Field Definition and Overlap Worksheet

The worksheet below is the distinctive asset of this report. It is organised so that each row is one defined concept, never a merged "instrument" concept. *Table 1* maps the concept to its authority layer, the evidence edition read for this report, what it measures, what underlying evidence the pilot would need, how it commonly appears in print, and whether it may be added to anything else.

Table 1. Definition-to-field matrix (suggested worksheet; legal layer labelled per row)

Concept	Authority and layer	Source and edition read	What it measures	Underlying evidence needed	Typical printed heading	Overlap and additivity warning
Aircraft flight duration	FAA 14 CFR 61.51(b): total flight time or lesson time (www.ecfr.gov)	eCFR, Title 14 last amended 15 October 2026	Duration of the flight or lesson	Block or flight times in the pilot's source record	Total Flight Time	The base quantity. All condition columns are subsets or overlays of it, never additions to it.
Actual instrument (FAA)	FAA 14 CFR 61.51(b)(3) conditions of flight (www.ecfr.gov) and 61.51(g)(1) (www.ecfr.gov)	eCFR, as above	The person's flight time operating solely by reference to instruments in actual conditions	Evidence of conditions and of the person's own operation (role-specific)	Actual Instrument	Overlaps IFR if the flight was also under IFR. Do not add to IFR or to aircraft time.
Simulated instrument (FAA)	FAA 14 CFR 61.51(b)(3) (www.ecfr.gov)	eCFR, as above	Time solely by reference to instruments under simulated conditions, in flight or in a device	View-limiting device use and, where required, safety pilot details (www.ecfr.gov)	Simulated Instrument	Distinct from actual instrument. Device time is outside this report's aircraft-only fixture.
Instrument flight time (EASA)	EASA Part-FCL FCL.010, law (www.easa.europa.eu)	Easy Access Rules, revision August 2023; October 2026 edition not compared line by line	Time a pilot controls an aircraft in flight solely by reference to instruments	Person-specific evidence tied to the purpose (for example training for a licence or rating)	Often a remark or training entry, not a column	Different from the IFR column. Not equal to flight time under IFR.
Instrument ground time (EASA)	EASA Part-FCL FCL.010, law	As above	Instruction in simulated instrument flight in a flight simulation training device	Device session records	Device or FSTD section	Outside the aircraft-only fixture. Never part of aircraft duration.
Flight time under IFR (EASA)	EASA Part-FCL FCL.010, law (www.easa.europa.eu)	As above	All flight time in which the aircraft is operated under IFR	Flight rules under which the flight was operated	IFR (operational condition column)	Overlaps night and instrument flight time. Not additive with either.
IFR operational-condition column (EASA)	EASA AMC1 FCL.050, acceptable means of compliance (www.easa.europa.eu)	As above	Night or IFR flight time as entered in column 9 of the sample logbook	Flight rules and, for night, the applicable night definition	IFR / Night (Operational Condition Time)	A sample format. National authorities set form and manner.

Table 1 shows that the same printed word can sit on rows with different authority layers. The practical reading is to start from the left-hand column (which concept) and the second column (which layer) before looking at the printed heading in the sixth column. The final column is the guard against the most common arithmetic mistake: treating a set of overlapping categories as if they were consecutive intervals.

How to use the matrix on a real record

The worksheet is applied one source flight at a time, in seven steps.

- **Read the jurisdiction and purpose first.** The meaning of "instrument" depends on the receiving form and its use.
- **Separate four layers.** Record flight rules, external conditions, the person's own instrument operation, and aircraft duration as four distinct fields.
- **Inventory the source fields.** List the fields the product actually has, with name, unit and documented definition.
- **Record provenance.** Label each figure pilot-entered, imported, inferred, or suggested. These labels are recommended audit metadata, not legal requirements.
- **Map to the print or export field.** Note the printed heading, the layout, and any option that combines columns.
- **Reproduce the totals.** Recalculate a small sample by hand, one flight per row, before trusting a page total.
- **Record unknowns.** Where evidence of the person's instrument operation does not exist, write UNKNOWN, not zero and not the flight's duration.

A cloud, route or flight-plan label alone cannot substantiate a person's exact qualifying instrument minutes. A flight-plan label supports the flight-rules field. It does not, on its own, show how long a particular person operated solely by reference to instruments.

Handling units and formats

Durations also differ in format. ForeFlight's template specifies total time in decimal format (support.foreflight.com) while accepting decimal or hh:mm for IFR. LogTen's import guidance requires one time format throughout the file (support.logten.com), and MyFlightbook requires optional property columns to use the whole column name exactly as written (myflightbook.com). A format or header mismatch can therefore leave an instrument column empty on import, which looks identical to a record with no instrument time. The mapping test records the unit explicitly for this reason.

Two-Flight Fixture and Report Mapping (Hypothetical Example)

The following fixture is synthetic. It is not a test of any named product, it does not claim that any vendor produced the figure of 140, and its numbers are not drawn from a real logbook. It exists to show how overlapping categories behave and what a mapping test should capture. It is aircraft-only: a 45-minute training-device record is deliberately left out, since device eligibility and caps belong to a separate simulator analysis.

Flight A (Hypothetical Example). A flight of 120 minutes is conducted under IFR. For 20 of those minutes, the pilot's qualifying actual-instrument operation is independently verified. The remaining 100 minutes are IFR time without verified qualifying operation. The record therefore holds 120 aircraft minutes, 120 IFR minutes, and 20 qualifying actual-instrument minutes. If a report adds the last two, it displays 140, which is not the flight's duration and not a legally interchangeable instrument total.

Flight B (Hypothetical Example). A flight of 90 minutes is all IFR. There is no adequate record of instrument conditions or of the person's role. The record holds 90 aircraft minutes, 90 IFR minutes, and UNKNOWN qualifying actual-instrument minutes. UNKNOWN is not zero, because the flight may have included qualifying operation that was never captured. It is also not 90, because the flight rules do not prove the person's operation. The correct state is an open item, resolved only by evidence or by a documented decision.

Table 2 lays out the mapping test. One source entry occupies each row, and the final columns show what different report configurations would print. The Report B combined-column configuration is illustrative: it is modelled on a print option described in a 2020 vendor support article and is not a claim about how any current software behaves.

Table 2. Mapping test with before and after configuration (Hypothetical Example; synthetic values)

Source entry	Aircraft time (min)	IFR (min)	Qualifying actual instrument (min)	Provenance label	Report A, separate columns	Report B, combined column "before"	Report B after configuration is corrected	Unknown fields
Flight A	120	120	20	Pilot-entered, with independent substantiation	IFR 120, Actual 20, Total 120	Combined 140, Total 120	IFR 120, Actual 20, Total 120	Simulated instrument not applicable
Flight B	90	90	UNKNOWN	IFR pilot-entered, actual instrument unsubstantiated	IFR 90, Actual blank, Total 90	Combined 90, Total 90	IFR 90, Actual blank, Total 90	Actual instrument minutes, role evidence
Sum of aircraft time	**210**	n/a	n/a	n/a	**210**	**210**	**210**	n/a

The interpretation is direct. Total aircraft time is 210 minutes in every configuration. In the "before" column the combined figure on Flight A reads 140, and the page total of a combined column would read 230 (140 plus 90), which exceeds the 210 aircraft minutes flown. That excess is the signature of overlapping categories being summed. The configuration correction changes only the print mapping. No source fact is edited, and no record is deleted. This mirrors the way CrewLounge's article presents the situation: the display option is cleared and the stored hours remain unchanged (support.crewlounge.aero).

Diagnosing a combined or mislabelled heading

When a printed report appears to combine IFR and instrument values, or when instrument time seems to be missing, a defensible order of operations is:

- **Check the totals page first.** Confirm the stored values still exist, as CrewLounge directs by pointing to its Totals page (support.crewlounge.aero).
- **Check the report configuration.** Look for options placing two fields in one column, and for hidden fields; LogTen documents that hidden data is still saved (support.logten.com).
- **Check the regional or format setting.** ForeFlight's release material says its European region renames fields such as IFR.
- **Read the receiving form's own definition.** Its heading governs what the figure must contain.
- **Do not delete or mass-clear records.** Changing a display option is reversible; deleting stored values is not.
- **Record what was found.** Keep a correction note with the date, report, configuration changed, and unresolved inputs.

CrewLounge also documents a rule-based feature that can auto-log a percentage of total flight time as actual instrument (support.crewlounge.aero). This report endorses no percentage, and a percentage is not evidence of a person's operation. A figure created that way should carry the label "inferred" or "suggested" until substantiated.

Implementation Considerations and Process Changes

Converting between FAA-style and EASA-style records

A conversion is a remapping of meaning, not a column rename. Taking an FAA-style record to an EASA-style report, the pilot has Actual Instrument and Simulated Instrument fields but may have no stored flight-rules field. ForeFlight's blog states directly that IFR time logged in the Actual or Simulated fields will not carry over automatically to the IFR field when a pilot changes region (foreflight.com). Taking an EASA-style record to an FAA-style report, a stored IFR figure cannot supply qualifying actual-instrument minutes, because the FAA test concerns the person's operation by reference to instruments (www.law.cornell.edu).

The method that preserves meaning is to keep the source fields separate and map outward, one report at a time:

- **Keep the stored fields as they are.** Do not overwrite IFR with Actual Instrument or the reverse.
- **Add the missing field rather than substituting.** If a flight rules field is absent, add it and fill it from flight-plan or clearance records, labelled by provenance.
- **Treat training remarks separately.** The EASA remarks entry for instrument flight time in training is a separate record from column 9.
- **Check units and headers.** Confirm decimal or hh:mm on both sides, and retain template columns as published.

LogTen also advises moving data kept in remarks, such as approaches and holds, into its own column before import (support.logten.com).

Mixed IFR and VFR portions, and device time

Flights are rarely uniform. CrewLounge's explanation notes that where an IFR flight plan is cancelled to continue under visual flight rules, only a portion of the flight is logged as IFR (support.crewlounge.aero). Qualifying instrument operation is likewise a subset needing its own evidence. For device time, vendors diverge: CrewLounge cautions not to confuse Simulator time with Simulated Instrument time (support.crewlounge.aero) and states that simulator IFR or simulated instrument hours are by default not printed and summed in its logbooks (support.crewlounge.aero). MyFlightbook's FAQ advises leaving Total Time blank for flights that should not count toward total time (myflightbook.com), and its developer blog works an example where a training device session carries simulated instrument time and a Total Time of 0 (myflightbookblog.blogspot.com). These are vendor conventions. Eligibility and caps for device time are outside this report.

Role-specific cases are verification questions

The FAA material illustrates why role-specific conclusions need their own source. An FAA Chief Counsel interpretation defines a safety pilot as a person who occupies a control seat in an aircraft during simulated instrument flight (www.faa.gov), and the instructor provision in 61.51(g)(2) applies in actual instrument flight conditions (www.law.cornell.edu). For first officers, relief pilots and others, no universal instruction is given here. The questions to put to the governing source are:

- **Four questions.** Which authority and purpose applies? Was the person controlling the aircraft by reference to instruments? What evidence of conditions exists? Does the receiving form want flight rules or instrument operation?

How a pilot evaluates a logbook product against this worksheet

A pilot assessing any electronic logbook can use the same tests: request the field definitions, export the two fixture flights, print them in the target layout, and confirm that IFR, actual and simulated values appear in the columns the receiving form expects, with total aircraft time unchanged. LANDING.AERO's Pilot Logbook, which is the publisher's own product and therefore not an independent example, is one such product, invitation-only, made by a line pilot. Its product page claims that instrument time is worked out for each flight, that totals can be customised, that printing is offered in 99 layouts matching paper logbooks of 14 authorities including the FAA and EASA, and that the whole logbook can be exported. These are unverified vendor claims: this report did not check the layout count or the authority list, and none of it is an authority approval. The page does not disclose a validated FAA or EASA instrument algorithm, a percentage method, or an equivalence guarantee, so a pilot should ask what a suggested instrument figure is based on and inspect a sample export against Table 1. Access is by invitation: request an invite.

Table 3 summarises what vendor sources say about their instrument-related fields. It is not a ranking.

Table 3. Documented instrument-related field models (vendor statements, not legal conclusions)

Product	Documented fields	Source date or edition	Limitation of the evidence
ForeFlight	IFR (support.foreflight.com), ActualInstrument (support.foreflight.com), SimulatedInstrument (support.foreflight.com) as separate import fields; European region added in 17.11, December 2025 (foreflight.com)	ForeFlight template and release pages, accessed 2 November 2026	The definition here comes from the ForeFlight 16.2 Logbook Guide, an earlier edition not checked against the current guide; it defines actual instrument as time flown solely by reference to instruments under actual conditions (cloudfront.foreflight.com)
LogTen	IFR and Actual Inst as separate fields, with regional styles (support.logten.com); fields can be hidden but data is saved (support.logten.com)	Support article dated 5 May 2026	No field-by-field test of every export
MyFlightbook	IMC (myflightbook.com), Simulated Instrument (myflightbook.com), and a separate optional IFR Time property (myflightbook.com); Night-IMC capped by night time on the flight (myflightbook.com)	Import reference read 2 November 2026	No round-trip or data-loss benchmark was performed
CrewLounge (PILOTLOG)	IFR and Actual Instrument as distinct concepts (support.crewlounge.aero); a print option that shares one column (support.crewlounge.aero)	Support articles dated 18 and 20 November 2020	Dated instructions, not a test of current software behaviour or a representative error rate
FlightLogger	One optional instrument time log for hood, foggles or other devices (help.flightlogger.net)	Help page undated	Describes one combined field; how it prints or exports was not examined
Pilot Logbook (LANDING.AERO)	Instrument time worked out per flight; custom totals; export; print layouts, per the product page	Publisher's own product page (vendor claims, not independently verified and not an independent source)	Algorithm and equivalence with any authority form are not publicly disclosed; invitation-only

Table 3 is an inventory of questions that a hands-on sample export would answer. The CrewLounge row is the only one documenting a combined print column, and it does so in 2020 instructions, so it informs method rather than describing the current release.

Data Analysis and Evidence

The quantitative core of this subject is small and specific: dates, editions, field counts, and the arithmetic of overlapping categories. No survey or benchmark of IFR-versus-instrument logging errors was found, and no source reports how often combined-column confusion occurs. The documents establish that readers meet the issue, not its prevalence. No trend and no exact search volume for this question were measured.

Dated evidence. The FAA text is current as displayed on 29 October 2026 per the eCFR header, with Title 14 last amended 15 October 2026 (www.ecfr.gov). EASA's online Easy Access Rules states that its published date is the date the consolidated version was generated (www.easa.europa.eu). The definitions quoted here were read from the August 2023 online revision, so the interval to the latest listed revision was not compared line by line. CrewLounge's two articles are dated 18 and 20 November 2020, about six years before this report. ForeFlight's European logbook support is dated December 2025, and LogTen's missing-instrument-times article is dated 5 May 2026 (support.logten.com).

Field counts. ForeFlight's template exposes three instrument-related duration fields (IFR, ActualInstrument, SimulatedInstrument), and MyFlightbook's reference also exposes three (IMC, Simulated Instrument, IFR Time) (myflightbook.com). The EASA sample logbook has one operational-condition column carrying night and IFR sub-columns (www.easa.europa.eu). Three instrument-related field names in two models, against one or two headings on a printed form, is the structural reason mapping needs a worksheet.

Arithmetic of overlapping categories. The fixture values are synthetic, so they are stated as calculation rather than tabulated again. The two flights total 120 plus 90, which is 210 aircraft minutes. The overlap-summed combined column reads 140 plus 90, which is 230. The difference of 20 minutes equals the qualifying actual-instrument figure of Flight A, because that interval is counted both in IFR and in Actual. The discrepancy is therefore not random: it equals the overlap. Any page total in a condition column that exceeds the aircraft total is a candidate for this mechanism, though duplicate imports can produce a similar symptom.

Source authority. Claims about law and acceptable means come from the regulators' own pages, claims about fields come from each vendor's documentation of its own product, and national procedure comes from one national authority. The CrewLounge printing article is cited without a text fragment, so readers should confirm its setting name and date on the vendor page.

Implications and Future Directions

A logbook is a source of facts and a report is a view of them. Treating the two as one object produces most of the conflict described here. A defensible practice is to store the finest-grained facts available (flight rules, conditions, the person's own instrument operation, provenance) and generate each authority's page from them. That does not require storing legal conclusions, only enough to reconstruct why a figure appears.

For vendors and support teams, the documented examples suggest that a combined display option is a convenience when labelled and can be confusing when not. That is an observation, not a measured rate, and the usefulness of the fixture to instructors or support staff is a hypothesis.

Open uncertainties:

- **Current editions.** The October 2026 EASA text, which incorporates flight simulation training device amendments, should be compared against the August 2023 revision used here; the four quoted definitions may or may not have changed.
- **Current product behaviour.** Dated vendor instructions, particularly from 2020, need checking against the current interface.

- **Historical records.** Where conditions or role cannot be reconstructed, UNKNOWN is the honest state. A percentage method is not a substitute for evidence.
- **Receiving forms.** An authority, employer or examiner may define the figure it wants, and that definition governs.
- **Other jurisdictions.** No conclusion for any authority other than the FAA and EASA is inferred from either.

None of this replaces an operator's approved procedures or an authority's or examiner's decision. For a certificate, rating or employment decision, consult the receiving authority's own instructions.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the difference between actual and simulated instrument time in a logbook?

Under the FAA rule, both are instrument time logged when the person operates the aircraft solely by reference to instruments, one in actual conditions and one in simulated conditions (www.law.cornell.edu). Vendor models keep them as separate fields (support.foreflight.com).

What counts as actual instrument time under FAA 61.51?

Paragraph (g)(1) ties it to the person's operation solely by reference to instruments under actual conditions (www.ecfr.gov), with an instructor provision in (g)(2) (www.ecfr.gov). An IFR flight plan alone is not the stated test.

How do I log IFR time under EASA?

The AMC1 FCL.050 sample logbook instructs entry, in column 9, of flight time undertaken at night or under instrument flight rules if applicable (www.easa.europa.eu). The competent authority establishes form and manner, so check national guidance.

Is EASA instrument time the same as IFR time?

No. FCL.010 defines instrument flight time by the pilot's control solely by reference to instruments (www.easa.europa.eu), and flight time under IFR by the flight rules of the operation.

Why does one report show a different instrument total from another?

Possible reasons are a different quantity under the same heading, a combining print option (support.crewlounge.aero), a region change, or hidden columns. Total flight duration is not affected.

Can I convert an FAA logbook to an EASA logbook?

Conversion remaps meaning. Keep source fields separate, add a flight-rules field where missing, and never overwrite one field with the other.

Do electronic logbooks work for both FAA and EASA purposes?

Acceptance is set by each authority. FCL.050 leaves form and manner to the competent authority, and one national authority accepts electronic logbooks if flights requiring endorsement are signed (www.iaa.ie). FAA electronic logbook procedure was not researched here.

Should I clear a combined-column setting or delete records?

According to CrewLounge's 2020 support article, clearing a display option changes the printout only (support.crewlounge.aero). Deleting records is not a fix.

Conclusion

Whether a column is "IFR" or "instrument" is a question of what it measures, under whose rule, and for what purpose. Under the FAA rule the instrument entry follows the person's operation solely by reference to instruments (www.law.cornell.edu). Under EASA, flight time under IFR, instrument flight time and the column-9 operational condition are related but separate concepts. Vendors then add their own field models and print options (support.logten.com).

Two reports can differ without any change to flight duration when overlapping categories share a column, a region or layout changes, a column is hidden, or the receiving form asks for something else. In the synthetic fixture, 120 IFR minutes plus 20 qualifying actual-instrument minutes gives 140 for a 120-minute flight.

The procedure is to read jurisdiction and purpose first, keep four layers separate, label provenance, mark unknowns as UNKNOWN, change configuration rather than records, and keep a correction note. The sources do not establish how often confusion occurs, how any current product behaves, or what an authority or examiner will accept in a particular case.

Source links

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

1. https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/14/61.51
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THE PUBLISHER

About LANDING.AERO

LANDING.AERO builds custom software for aviation operations teams at airlines, charter operators and flight departments. It is based in Montreal.

What it builds

Operations tools that reduce manual steps in day-to-day flight operations; integration of existing systems and data sources into one operational picture; workflow automation; real-time operational dashboards; bridges between legacy systems and modern applications; and mobile apps for staff in the field. Each application is designed around the operator's own workflows rather than sold as an off-the-shelf platform.

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

LANDING.AERO also publishes tools for aviation professionals: Pilot Logbook, an invitation-only electronic logbook made by a line pilot that logs flights from the pilot's roster and flight plan, works offline and prints in the logbook layouts of 14 authorities; UTC Alarm, which sets alarms in Zulu time; and NOTAM Notifier, announced for NOTAM change alerts on chosen airports.

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