📥 IFR Flight Planning Checklist – Phase by Phase

Created by LetsFlyVFR.com for the Flight Sim Community.

✈️ Phase 1: Pre-Flight Planning

Before touching the simulator or the skies, confirm mission viability.

- ☑ Aircraft is IFR-certified or properly simulated
- ☑ Performance & fuel requirements calculated
- ☑ Suitable aircraft selected for terrain and distance
- ☑ Cruise altitude & route structure decided (airways, direct routing)

🗺️ Phase 2: Route & Flight Plan Filing

Define how you'll get from A to B—with legal and safe routing.

- ☑ Flight plan created via SimBrief, FAA tools, or in-sim planner
- ☑ SID and STAR procedures selected
- ☑ Alternate airport added if required
- ☑ Route includes valid waypoints, airways, and fixes
- ☑ Check airspace types: Class A/B/C/D transitions

🌐 Phase 3: Navigation & Communications Setup

Equip your cockpit with reliable navigation and comms.

- ☑ NAV sources available (VOR, NDB, GPS)
- ☑ Arrival ILS/LOC/VOR frequencies confirmed
- ☑ FMS/GPS programmed with route
- ☑ Comms frequencies listed (ATIS, Tower, Departure, Center)
- ☑ Position report requirements reviewed

Phase 4: Weather Briefing

Stay weather-aware to avoid unexpected hazards.

- ☑ METARs & TAFs analyzed for departure/destination/alternate
- ☑ Review SIGMETs/AIRMETs and WX charts
- ☑ Watch for turbulence, icing, volcanic ash, or thunderstorms
- ☑ Winds aloft checked for fuel planning
- ☑ Approach minima verified for destination/alternate

📄 Phase 5: Charts & Documentation

Have every chart and NOTAM at your fingertips.

- ☑ Download IFR enroute charts & approach plates
- ☑ SID/STAR diagrams and airport layouts included
- ☑ Check publication dates (don’t fly with expired charts!)
- ☑ NOTAMs reviewed for route, departure, and arrival airfields

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🛫 Phase 6: Departure Procedures

Dial in your avionics and prep for clearance.

- ☑ Autopilot/nav modes set for departure
- ☑ Departure frequencies tuned
- ☑ IFR clearance copied correctly
- ☑ Squawk code set; transponder on/standby
- ☑ Initial heading and altitude assignment noted

🛬 Phase 7: Arrival & Approach Setup

Land with confidence—even if weather or systems degrade.

- ☑ Active runway and approach type confirmed (ILS, RNAV, etc.)
- ☑ Barometric pressure (QNH/Altimeter) set correctly
- ☑ ILS or approach navaid tuned & ID’d
- ☑ Missed approach procedure reviewed
- ☑ Alternate airport strategy in place for poor weather

⚠ Phase 8: Backup & Emergency Protocols

Build safety buffers in case things go sideways.

- ☑ Comms check: Two-way radio verified
- ☑ Dual navigation sources active (e.g., VOR + GPS)
- ☑ Backup airport weather reviewed & charts ready
- ☑ Emergency steps briefed (diversion, equipment loss)
- ☑ Fuel endurance calculated for worst-case scenarios

NOTES:
