UK Drone Flyer Starter Checklist

A one-sitting “before you fly” sheet for flying a drone or model aircraft outdoors in the United Kingdom.

Please read first

This checklist is an independent Aviatorfinds summary. It is not official UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) material and is not endorsed by the CAA. It does not replace the current Drone and Model Aircraft Code, the official rules, or any operational authorisation. Summarised points were checked against official CAA pages and the March 2026 Code on 15 November 2026. Rules and fees can change. If anything here disagrees with the official text, follow the official text.

Read and keep the official Code: The Drone and Model Aircraft Code (CAP2320, March 2026). Starting point on the CAA site: https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/open-category/getting-started-with-drones-and-model-aircraft/.

1. Work out which IDs you need

The IDs you need depend on the weight of the aircraft and whether it has a camera. Official source: the CAA Flyer ID and Operator ID page, checked 15 November 2026: https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/open-category/getting-started-with-drones-and-model-aircraft/flyer-ids-and-operator-ids/, and the March 2026 Code.

- [ ] Weigh your drone or model aircraft and note whether it has a camera. Weight and camera equipment affect which ID you need and which flying rules apply. If you add accessories, re-check the weight.
- [ ] Flyer ID. You must get a Flyer ID if you want to fly a drone or model aircraft that weighs 100 g or above. The official CAA page says you get it by passing a free online theory test, and that a Flyer ID is valid for five years (you must take the test again to renew it). Children under 13 must also pass the test, and must take it with a parent or guardian.
- [ ] Operator ID. You must get an Operator ID if you own or are responsible for a drone or model aircraft that weighs 250 g or above, or that weighs 100 g or above and has a camera. You must be aged 18 or over to register for an Operator ID. If you are under 18 and you own the aircraft, someone else must register as the Operator; you can still fly if you have a Flyer ID. You can use the same Operator ID for all your drones and model aircraft.
- [ ] Operator ID fee. The official CAA page stated a cost of £12.34 per year when checked on 15 November 2026, with the ID valid for one year. Fees can change — confirm on the official page before you pay.
- [ ] You don’t need a Flyer ID or Operator ID to fly a drone or model aircraft that weighs less than 100 g — but you must still follow the other rules in the Code.
- [ ] Carry a copy of your Flyer ID if you have one. The Code recommends this.

2. Label the aircraft

- [ ] Label every drone or model aircraft that needs it with your Operator ID, not your Flyer ID. The official Code says the Operator ID must be labelled on every such aircraft, and that you can use the same Operator ID for all of them. Follow the official labelling instructions in the Code.

3. Remote ID

Remote ID is a way for drones and model aircraft to transmit identity and location when flying. Official source, checked 15 November 2026: https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/open-category/moving-on-to-more-advanced-flying/remote-id-rid.

- [ ] You must have Remote ID switched on whenever you fly from the applicable date onwards. In the Open category, the official CAA table says use of Remote ID becomes mandatory from 1 January 2026 for UK1, UK2 and UK3 aircraft, and from 1 January 2028 for UK0 aircraft weighing 100 g or more with a camera, UK4 (for example model aircraft), legacy UAS (not UK class-marked) weighing 100 g or more with a camera, and privately built aircraft weighing 100 g or more with a camera. Other categories and authorisation dates are set out in that official table — check it if you do not fly in the Open category.
- [ ] The CAA recommends switching on Remote ID even if it is not yet mandatory for your aircraft.
- [ ] Your Remote ID number is similar to, but not the same as, your Operator ID. It is case sensitive. The last three characters are a private key: keep them secure, never write the private key on the aircraft, and never share it. If you think someone may know it, the official page says to contact drone.registration@caa.co.uk to request a new one.

- [ ] Enter the Remote ID number, including the private key, following the manufacturer's instructions. Keep the aircraft's firmware and software up to date. If you sell the aircraft or let someone else use it, remove your Remote ID number from it.

4. Before you go out

- [ ] Read the current Drone and Model Aircraft Code, not only this sheet.
- [ ] Check the weather and whether it is safe and legal to fly.
- [ ] Check airspace and restrictions. The official Code says most airports, airfields and spaceports have a flight restriction zone (FRZ). Never fly in that zone unless you have permission from the airport, airfield or spaceport. Some smaller airfields do not have an FRZ, but you still must not fly on or near them where you could pose a danger to aircraft. The Code points to NATS' map of airspace restrictions, and warns that some short-notice restrictions are not shown on that map.
- [ ] Check the aircraft: batteries, props, damage, and that anything you must have switched on (including Remote ID, if it applies) is working.
- [ ] The Operator must maintain the aircraft and make sure only people with a valid Flyer ID use it, if a Flyer ID is required.

5. While you fly

- [ ] Height. The official Code's general legal height limit is 120 m (400 ft). Your aircraft must never be more than 120 m (400 ft) from the closest point of the earth's surface. Some limited exceptions (including certain model gliders and flying close to very tall structures) are set out in the Code. If in doubt, stay below the general 120 m limit and read those points in the official text.
- [ ] People and places. The distance you must keep from people, and whether you may fly over them, depends on the Open sub-category (Over People / Near People / Far from People) and on the class or weight of your aircraft. Those distances are set out in the official Code and are not all the same. Check the table that applies to your aircraft before you fly, rather than relying on a single figure from memory.
- [ ] Do not endanger aircraft. The official Code warns that if you endanger the safety of an aircraft, you could go to prison for five years.
- [ ] Respect people's privacy, and follow the official privacy points in the Code.
- [ ] If another aircraft appears, the Code says to reduce your flying height or land as soon as you hear or see it, when that is the safe thing to do — follow the official wording.

If you are unsure

Do not fly until you have checked the official Code and the CAA pages linked above. This sheet is a memory aid for a first outing, not a complete statement of the law.

Sources and checking date

Facts in this download were checked against the official sources below on 15 November 2026. Rules, dates, fees and show arrangements can change. Always confirm on the official page before you rely on a figure or a date.

• UK CAA, Flyer IDs and Operator IDs, checked 15 November 2026: https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/open-category/getting-started-with-drones-and-model-aircraft/flyer-ids-and-operator-ids/ (free Flyer ID test; five-year validity; Operator ID age, responsibilities, labelling; Operator ID stated as £12.34 per year and valid for 1 year on the date checked).

• UK CAA, The Drone and Model Aircraft Code, CAP2320, March 2026: https://www.caa.co.uk/media/csmfqbs1/the-drone-code-march-2026.pdf (ID thresholds by weight and camera; labelling; 120 m / 400 ft height limit; Open sub-categories and distances from people; FRZs and NATS map; maintenance and Flyer ID use).

• UK CAA, Remote ID (RID), checked 15 November 2026: https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/open-category/moving-on-to-more-advanced-flying/remote-id-rid (mandatory dates by class, including 1 January 2026 for UK1, UK2 and UK3 in the Open category, and 1 January 2028 for the classes listed on that page; private key; firmware; remove RID if you sell the aircraft).

Official CAA wording has been summarised, not copied in full. The Code and the CAA pages are the authoritative text.

Exact Open-category distances from people are not printed as a single figure in this checklist, because they vary by sub-category and class. See the official Code table.

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