



**AERO DRONE ACADEMY**

# **UNDERSTANDING UK DRONE REGULATIONS**

A plain-English overview of key drone rules and responsibilities.



**Covers:**

- Where you can and can't fly
- VLOS basics
- Pilot and operator responsibilities
- Why compliance matters

# Understanding UK Drone Regulations

## A Plain-English Guide to Staying Legal in 2026

### Where You Can and Can't Fly

The UK uses a "three-category" system, but as a beginner, you will likely start in the Open Category (low-risk). This is subdivided by where you fly:

- **A1 (Over People):** For very small drones (under 250g, such as the DJI Mini series). You can fly over people, but never over crowds (assemblies of people).
- **A2 (Near People):** For drones up to 2kg. You must stay 50m away from uninvolved people unless you have an A2 Certificate of Competency (A2 CofC) and a "Class Marked" drone, which can allow you to get closer.
- **A3 (Far from People):** For larger drones (up to 25kg). You must stay 150m away from residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational areas and 50m away from people.
- **Altitude Limit:** You must never fly higher than 120m (400ft) above the ground.



- Flight Restriction Zones (FRZs): You are strictly prohibited from flying within 5km of an airport or in restricted military/prison airspace without specific CAA permission.

## **The VLOS Rule: Keeping Your Eyes on the Prize**

VLOS stands for Visual Line of Sight.

- The Rule: You must be able to see your drone clearly with your own eyes at all times.
- Why it matters: You cannot rely solely on your phone screen or goggles. You need to scan the sky for birds, other aircraft, or obstacles that the camera might miss.
- FPV Flying: If you are wearing goggles (First Person View), the law requires you to have a "Competent Observer" standing next to you who can see the drone and the surrounding sky.



## Pilot vs. Operator: Who is Responsible?

In the UK, the law distinguishes between the person flying and the person who owns the gear.

Role	Responsibility	Requirement
Flyer ID	The Pilot. Must know the rules and pass the online test.	<b>Mandatory</b> for anyone flying a drone <b>100g or heavier</b> .
Operator ID	The Owner/Business. Responsible for maintenance and labeling.	Mandatory for any drone with a camera (or any drone 250g+).

*Note for Aero Drone Academy Students: Your Operator ID must be clearly displayed on the main body of the drone in block capitals at least 3mm high.*



## Why Compliance Matters

At Aero Drone Academy, we believe a professional pilot is a compliant pilot. Ignoring the rules isn't just risky—it's costly:

- **Heavy Fines:** Flying without the correct IDs or in restricted airspace can lead to unlimited fines.
- **Criminal Records:** Serious breaches (like endangering an aircraft) can lead to prison time.
- **Insurance:** Most insurance providers will void your policy if you are found to be flying outside of the UK Drone Code.
- **Reputation:** As the drone industry grows, public trust is vital. One "cowboy" pilot makes it harder for the rest of us to fly.

## Summary for New Pilots

1. **Register:** Get your Flyer & Operator IDs from the CAA website.
2. **Label:** Put your Operator ID on your drone.
3. **Check:** Use an app like Drone Assist to check the airspace before you power up.
4. **Watch:** Keep the drone in your sight and stay below 400ft.

