

Flight rule change

In addition to major airports and airfields with an RMZ (Radio Mandatory Zone), there are many smaller airfields that do not have published IFR procedures. At these airfields, operations must always be conducted under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) for takeoff or landing. If the flight is to be conducted under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) (e.g., due to weather conditions), the flight plan must either begin or end in the air. In Germany, the **Y** and **Z** flight plans indicate a change in flight rules during the flight.

Apart from the absence of IFR procedures, worsening weather can also cause a situation where VFR is no longer permitted in the airspace where the aircraft is located, forcing the pilot to switch to IFR.

In a **Y flight plan**, the pilot starts the flight IFR and later switches to VFR.

In a **Z flight plan**, the pilot starts VFR and later switches to IFR.

Yankee Flight Plan (IFR-Cancellation)

In a **Y flight plan**, the switch from IFR to VFR occurs, meaning that the departure is conducted under IFR and the approach under VFR. This is necessary, for example, when the destination airport does not have published IFR procedures (e.g., Egelsbach EDFE).

The pilot requests cancellation of IFR from the controller at or before the last waypoint. At this point, the pilot must be in Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC), otherwise, the switch is not (yet) possible. The controller does not need to ensure that the pilot is in VMC. When the pilot announces the intention to end the IFR part with the phrase "**CANCELLING MY IFR FLIGHT**," it implies that they are in VMC.

If the pilot is switching in Class C or D airspace, they must be informed how to exit this airspace or whether the further flight will be conducted under VFR. This instruction is given along with the IFR cancellation.

The switch from IFR to VFR may only take place above the Minimum Vectoring Altitude (MVA) or on published IFR procedures (SID, STAR, approach procedures, airways) above the respective minimum altitude.

In the flight plan, the route is specified as in the following example from Stuttgart (EDDS) to Egelsbach (EDFE). The blue section represents the IFR part, and the green section represents the VFR part of the flight, with the switch occurring at the SPESA waypoint.

The pilot receives a standard IFR clearance in Stuttgart, except that it only extends to the last waypoint before the planned change in flight rules, in this case, SPESA. SPESA is therefore the **Clearance Limit**. As the pilot approaches this clearance limit, the controller should issue a lateral clearance to SPESA (heading, STAR, holding), so both parties know what the pilot will do upon reaching the clearance limit, assuming they haven't yet canceled the IFR flight.

The controller should not prompt the pilot to end the IFR flight; the initiative must come from the pilot.

The general procedure is as follows:

1. The pilot explicitly announces the change in flight rules with the phrase: "**CANCELLING MY IFR FLIGHT.**"
2. The controller reports the exact time the flight rule change took place. If necessary, the pilot must be given instructions on how to exit controlled airspace.
3. When possible, the pilot is instructed to set the transponder to VFR and is approved to leave the frequency.

Cancellation in der the traffic circuit (Tower)

Here too, the pilot must be in **VMC** at the time of the flight rule change and must report this. Furthermore, the aircraft must be on a published procedure and at its minimum altitude (usually the ILS approach).

The general procedure is:

1. The pilot announces the flight rule change with the phrase: "**CANCELLING MY IFR FLIGHT.**"
2. The controller reports the exact time or the altitude at which the IFR flight rules are terminated and the current position. They also inform the pilot of what to do next (e.g., "after Touch-and-Go, join traffic pattern RWY 23L") and instruct the pilot to set the transponder to VFR.

Phraseology examples

Example of IFR Clearance for the Y Flight Plan:

Station	Phraseology
Pilot	Stuttgart Delivery, DESAG at GAT, Info B, request startup and IFR-clearance.
ATC	DESAG, Stuttgart Delivery, startup approved, cleared to SPESA, *via* ETASA2H departure, flight planned route, climb to *altitude* 5000ft, Squawk 2215.

Pilot	Startup approved, cleared to SPESA, ETASA2H departure, flight planned route, climbing to *altitude* 5000ft, Squawk 2215, DESAG.
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Example of IFR Cancellation - Airspace E:

Station	Phraseology
Pilot	DESAG cancelling my IFR flight.
ATC	DESAG, IFR cancelled at 1520z, Squawk VFR, approved to leave frequency
Pilot	IFR cancelled, Squawk VFR, approved to leave frequency

Example of IFR Cancellation - Airspace C or D:

Station	Phraseology
Pilot	DESAG cancelling my IFR flight.
ATC	DESAG, leave airspace C/D (to below) on present heading, IFR cancelled at 1520z.
Pilot	Leaving airspace C/D (to below) on present heading, IFR cancelled, DESAG
<i>Anmerkung: Der Pilot befindet sich nun außerhalb C/D.</i>	
ATC	DESAG, you are leaving airspace C, Squawk VFR, approved to leave frequency
Pilot	Squawk VFR, approved to leave frequency, DESAG, bye.

Example of IFR Cancellation - Tower Control Zone:

Station	Phraseology
Pilot	Düsseldorf Tower, DESAG on ILS approach RWY 23L, cancelling my IFR flight and continue VFR for Traffic pattern.
ATC	DESAG, IFR cancelled at time 0910 zulu, position 5nm final RWY 23L, squawk VFR. After Touch-and-Go join traffic circuit RWY 23L. Wind 20004kt, RWY 23L cleared for Touch-and-Go.
Pilot	IFR cancelled at time 0910 zulu, squawk VFR, after Touch-and-Go joining traffic circuit RWY 23L. RWY 23L cleared for Touch-and-Go, DESAG

Zulu Flight Plan (IFR Pickup)

In a **Z flight plan**, the flight rule change occurs from VFR to IFR. The IFR clearance is received from the radar controller during the flight, which is why it is also known as an **IFR Pickup**. The flight plan specifies where the IFR portion should begin. In addition to the waypoint, the speed-level group must also be specified (see example).

The squawk code must be given to the pilot before the enroute clearance since the aircraft must be identified before being cleared. This includes the **Clearance Limit** (in the example, the destination airport), the route the aircraft will take to its first waypoint or the planned route (usually direct), and an initial altitude clearance, along with the information on when the IFR portion begins (the pilot must be above the **MVA**). If the pilot is already above the MVA, the IFR portion can begin immediately (**IFR starts now**).

Depending on traffic and airspace structure, the IFR pickup may occur later or at a different location than planned.

Here's an example flight from Egelsbach back to Stuttgart. The IFR portion is set to begin at RID, with a true airspeed (TAS) of 180 KT at a cruising altitude of FL130.

“ DCT CHA DCT RID/N0180F130 IFR Y163 NEKLO Y171 INKAM N850 KRH T128
BADSO

The pilot departs Egelsbach and flies VFR over the CHA VOR to the RID VOR. Here, he wishes to switch flight rules.

Procedure

At the time of the flight rule change (not the clearance), the pilot must be above the Minimum Vectoring Altitude (MVA) or on a published procedure at its minimum altitude.

If not, the pilot must be informed that the IFR clearance will only become effective after passing the MVA or reaching the published procedure. For the pickup, the pilot will be given a squawk code shortly before their desired point in the air, which allows them to be identified and receive IFR clearance.

The general procedure is as follows:

1. The pilot requests an IFR pickup.
2. The controller assigns a squawk code and identifies the aircraft.
3. The controller gives the pilot full IFR clearance to the destination, including route guidance (cleared level). There must also be instructions on how to proceed from the current position to the first waypoint of the IFR route and when exactly the IFR portion of the flight begins (e.g., "right now," "when passing 5000 feet," or "IFR starts after RID").
4. The pilot must read back the clearance.

Similar to the exit procedure in a Y flight plan, the pilot must also be cleared to enter Class C or D airspace and be given any relevant instructions if the IFR portion starts within that airspace.

Phraseology

Station	Phraseology
Pilot	Langen Radar, good day, DEKSA.
ATC	DEKSA, Langen Radar, good day.
Pilot	DEKSA, Cessna 172, departed Egelsbach, 10 miles north-east of RID VOR, 1200ft, request IFR clearance to EDDS.
ATC	DSA, Squawk 2140, QNH 1013.
Pilot	Squawk 2140, QNH 1013, DSA.
ATC	DEKSA, identified, cleared to Stuttgart via RID VOR (<i>this means: Direct RID</i>), flight planned route, climb to *altitude* 5000ft, IFR starts after passing 3500ft.
Pilot	Cleared to Stuttgart via RID VOR, flight planned route, climbing to *altitude* 5000ft, IFR starts after passing 3500ft, DSA.
ATC	DSA, readback correct.