

DESCEND. WHAT ABOUT THE LIMITS?

CLIMB / DESCEND VIA or ... AND MAINTAIN?

Same procedure. Different clearances.
What survives the next ATC instruction?



**Altitude and speed do not
follow the same cancellation rule.**

WHERE? HOW HIGH? AT WHAT SPEED?

SID: a standard departure route.

STAR: a standard arrival route.

01 Route

Which waypoints to fly through.

02 Altitude

What altitude to cross each fix at,
and how far the clearance permits.

03 Speed

What speed to meet at each fix.

**A STAR in your cleared route does not,
by itself, authorize descent.**

DESCEND VIA

Follow the route. Meet the restrictions.

The crew chooses a descent profile that meets the applicable altitude and speed restrictions.

In this example, the STAR bottom altitude is 6,000 ft.



Illustrative STAR. Points A / B / C. Not to scale.

Not “straight to 6,000”: meet the active restrictions on the way. Lower requires further clearance.

DESCEND AND MAINTAIN

SIX THOUSAND

Previous altitude restrictions are canceled unless ATC restates or modifies them.



Illustrative STAR. Points A / B / C. Not to scale.

**The route and published speeds remain.
A new altitude does not cancel a speed restriction.**

EXCEPT MAINTAIN IS NOT AND MAINTAIN

Illustrative SID: published top altitude 14,000 ft.
The route contains altitude and speed restrictions.

CLIMB VIA SID

To the 14,000 ft top altitude. Meet the restrictions.

CLIMB VIA SID EXCEPT MAINTAIN ONE ZERO THOUSAND

To 10,000 ft. The other restrictions
within the clearance still apply.

CLIMB AND MAINTAIN ONE ZERO THOUSAND

To 10,000 ft. Previous altitude restrictions
are canceled unless restated or modified.

The route and published speeds are unchanged here.

WHY IS THE ALTITUDE NOT ALWAYS SPOKEN?

VIA is also used by ICAO. The clearance format differs.

ICAO

CLIMB VIA SID TO (level)
DESCEND VIA STAR TO (level)

The cleared altitude or flight level must be included in the instruction.

FAA

CLIMB VIA SID
DESCEND VIA [STAR]

The limit may come from the chart:
the SID top or STAR bottom altitude.

**This is a published procedural difference, not slang.
Check the State AIP for local implementation.**

NO RUNWAY ASSIGNED. HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

The word **VIA** alone does not give the answer.

01 Which STAR and transition are cleared?

Check the cleared route, runway transition and notes on the current chart.

02 What bottom altitude applies?

Use the cleared portion and ATC amendments.
Not simply the lowest number anywhere on the page.

03 Still ambiguous without a runway?

Clarify with ATC. Do not guess
the transition or the cleared altitude.

DESCEND VIA is not an approach clearance.

LISTEN TO THE WHOLE CLEARANCE.

VIA

Follow the route, altitudes and speeds required by the procedure and current ATC clearance.

... AND MAINTAIN

Previous altitude restrictions are canceled unless restated or modified.
Speeds are not automatically canceled.

VIA ... EXCEPT MAINTAIN

The top or bottom altitude changes. Other restrictions within the clearance still apply.

Shared understanding matters more than familiar shorthand.

These examples stay on the route. Vectors and ODPs are excluded.

Overview only. Use current AIP, charts, ATC clearance and SOPs.