The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has developed harmonized phraseology for Standard Instrument Departures (SIDs) and Standard Terminal Arrivals (STARs).
FAQ

1. What does a “CLIMB VIA” or “DESCEND VIA” clearance mean?

**ANS:** - Comply with the lateral path of the SID
- Comply with all published speed restrictions
- Comply with all published altitude restrictions

2. When will controllers use the term VIA?

**ANS:** When there are published altitude or speed restrictions on a RNAV SID, or STAR ahead of the route of flight.
When cleared to exit controlled airspace
Taxi clearances
FSS – positive vehicle control

3. How does a pilot determine what altitude to climb to if they receive a “CLIMB VIA” clearance?

**ANS:** ATC will always assign an altitude. Therefore, the aircraft is cleared to the ATC-cleared altitude.

4. The aircraft is on a “CLIMB VIA” or “DESCEND VIA” clearance and the controller vectors the aircraft off the procedure. Does the aircraft continue to “CLIMB or DESCEND VIA”?

**ANS:** NO. They are laterally and vertically off the procedure. The controller will issue an altitude to maintain and may issue a planned re-intercept point.

5. Just after crossing a speed-restricted fix at 280 kt on a STAR, ATC assigns a pilot a heading and altitude to maintain. What speed should be maintained?

**ANS:** The published speed is cancelled. Speed is at the pilot’s discretion unless ATC has assigned one.

6. If an instrument approach procedure connects to the STAR, are the instrument approach procedure altitudes part of the STAR?

**ANS:** NO. Pilots must receive an appropriate approach clearance from ATC before descending below a cleared altitude on a “DESCEND VIA” clearance.
7. If an aircraft is cleared for an RNAV approach and ATC requires the aircraft to specifically fly over a waypoint to commence the approach, how will this be phrased without using VIA?

**ANS:** “ABC CLEARED TO THE MUSKOKA AIRPORT, RNAV RWY THREE-SIX APPROACH, SASOS TRANSITION”

8. Must pilots begin an immediate descent when issued a “DESCEND VIA” clearance?

**ANS:** NO, they may start descent when ready.

9. Can controllers issue a "DESCEND VIA" clearance for a STAR that does not have published crossing restrictions?

**ANS:** A "Descend VIA" clearance is not necessary on a STAR that does not have published altitude or speed restrictions.

10. An aircraft is on a STAR in level flight. The controller instructs the pilot to "MAINTAIN SPEED THREE-ZERO-ZERO KNOTS.” Later, the controller clears the aircraft to “DESCEND VIA STAR.” Does the pilot now have to comply with any published speeds on the STAR?

**ANS:** NO. The aircraft must follow the ATC-assigned speed until another speed is assigned or CARs overrides.

11. ATC issues a “DESCEND VIA” clearance, followed by “MAINTAIN SPEED TWO-EIGHT-ZERO KNOTS.” Does this cancel any upcoming published speed restrictions?

**ANS:** YES. ATC expects the pilot to maintain the assigned speed. However, pilots are not exempt from complying with CARs speed requirements.

12. How will an aircraft comply with published speeds on a departure?

**ANS:** Consider each published speed restriction generally as a “DO NOT EXCEED” speed limit until the aircraft has crossed the associated waypoint. The aircraft may then accelerate so as not to exceed the next speed restriction (if applicable). After meeting the last published speed, accelerate as per CARs and/or the appropriate speed profile for the aircraft.
13. A controller issues a speed for an aircraft to maintain. Later, the aircraft is cleared to “RESUME NORMAL SPEED.” Can the aircraft fly a speed at their discretion?

ANS: Pilots can maintain a speed at their discretion only until the next published speed restriction on the STAR. They must then comply with that restriction, and any other remaining published speed restrictions.

14. If an aircraft is asked to descend before it reaches the first point of the STAR, does the new phraseology apply?

ANS: Yes, there may be a restriction at the first point on the STAR that you expect the aircraft to comply with.

If there will be a portion of the descent that will occur within the STAR procedure, ATC will issue a “DESCEND VIA” clearance.

15. When will the following note on STAR plates start to be removed: “When a lower altitude is issued, pilots shall descend on the STAR profile to the ATC-assigned altitude. Charted restrictions above the assigned altitude remain mandatory”?

ANS: The note will be removed from some STAR plates on MARCH 2, and will be removed from all STAR plates with subsequent publications of the CAP.

The Transport Canada AIM will still contain the note “All charted altitude and speed restrictions, including those at the DTW or FACF, are mandatory unless specifically cancelled by ATC.”

16. Was there an AIC or NOTAM published before March 2 with reference to the removal of the note on the STAR plates?

ANS: There is information in AIC 2/17 about the note being removed from the STAR plates. There will not be a NOTAM published. There will also be a Standards and Procedures memo written and distributed to staff.
17. There are some illustrations on SID procedures that appear to be published restrictions with no fix associated. Should a controller use the "VIA SID" phraseology?

ANS: No, these are illustrations that complement the departure instructions but do not constitute a published restriction for the use of "CLIMB VIA".

ANS: They indicate to the aircrew not to turn until the illustrated altitude.

18. An aircraft on a STAR has already been cleared to a lower altitude and has started to descend. Subsequently the pilot is given further descent "VIA STAR". Can the aircraft stop the descent, level off at an intermediate altitude and continue the descent when ready?

ANS: This is the same as today, in Canada, once a pilot starts ya descent, the pilot should continue to descend. The expression "when ready" is implied when a "VIA STAR" clearance is given.

19. If an aircraft on a STAR with restrictions is given a descent clearance and the words "DESCEND VIA" are not used, can that aircraft now ignore the altitude and speed restrictions?

ANS: NO. The "DESCEND VIA" is informing the aircraft explicitly that it must meet published restrictions. Omitting the term is not approved. If ATC needs to cancel restrictions, ATC will have to cancel them using explicit terms. This phraseology is designed to meet ICAO standards.
20. “DESCEND VIA” means that a pilot can descend “when ready”. What phraseology will be used when ATC needs the aircraft to start descent immediately?

**ANS:** "DESCEND NOW VIA STAR"

21. What phraseology will be used when ATC needs the aircraft to start descent immediately?

**ANS:** While the aircraft is still in the hold, the phraseology is no different than today.

22. Usually ATC will issue the full clearance then clear an aircraft for takeoff when they receive validation. How and where will ATC put “VIA SID” in the clearance?

- **ANS:** For a Vector or Pilot Nav SID "ABC CLEARED TO THE HAMILTON AIRPORT, WATERLOO ONE DEPARTURE, DIRECT, CLIMB FOUR THOUSAND, SQUAWK..." will be used.
- **ANS:** For an RNAV SID with published restrictions, “ABC CLEARED TO THE HAMILTON AIRPORT, WATERLOO ONE DEPARTURE, DIRECT, CLIMB VIA SID FOUR THOUSAND, SQUAWK...” is used.

23. What's changing with the word VIA, compared to how it is used today?

**ANS:** VIA is removed from the routing segment of an IFR clearance. There is no replacement, it is simply removed.

24. What's new for initial clearances?

**ANS:** ATC must now assign an altitude and get a readback in all initial IFR clearances.

25. What kind of SIDs require the use of “CLIMB VIA?”

**ANS:** ATC will use CLIMB VIA SID only with RNAV SIDs that have charted restrictions (noise abatement procedures are not considered charted restrictions).

26. How and when will ATC use “CLIMB VIA” for hybrid Vector-RNAV SIDs?

**ANS:** In the case of a hybrid SID (vectors to waypoint on transition route), ATC will use CLIMB TO in the initial IFR clearance. The departure controller will use CLIMB VIA SID once the aircraft joins the RNAV portion of the SID which has charted restrictions.
27. For a Pre Departure Clearance (PDC), is the altitude included in the PDC message?

ANS: PDC 622 and 623 applications do not preclude ATC from assigning an altitude and getting a readback verbally. Consultation with Operational System Requirements is ongoing to provide a solution; in the interim, sites must implement local procedures.

28. If ATC needs to amend the heading assigned to an aircraft who has already received its initial clearance, does ATC have to restate the altitude again?

ANS: A tower issued turn on departure qualifies as an amended SID, not a vector off SID, so there is no requirement to restate the altitude unless it is different than the assigned altitude in the initial clearance.

29. Can ATC add restrictions to a “DESCEND VIA” clearance?

ANS: Even though DESCEND VIA STAR implies when ready, tactical restrictions due to traffic can be added to a DESCEND VIA STAR clearance.

30. When ATC has to do a ‘Ladder Job’ for a climb or descent, will they say “CLIMB VIA” or “DESCEND VIA” every time?

ANS: When ATC ladders traffic in on a SID or STAR, they will use CLIMB VIA SID or DESCEND VIA STAR with every assigned altitude.

31. If ATC has an aircraft holding in a published hold that is within the STAR procedure, will they use “DESCEND VIA?”

ANS: When ATC ladders traffic in a hold, they will use DESCEND TO. When traffic exits the hold and continues on the STAR, they will use DESCEND VIA STAR.

32. When ATC is ready to give the approach clearance, and needs the aircraft to fly a specific transition, how will that be stated?

ANS: If ATC requires a certain route be flown on the approach, they will include the transition (waypoint) at the end of the approach clearance.
33. Is there any change to the procedure if ATC regularly clears aircraft out of controlled airspace, and needs them to exit at a certain point?

**ANS:** The use of CLEARED OUT OF CONTROLLED AIRSPACE VIA is acceptable and unchanged.