

This briefing is for flight instructors and test applicants to prepare for practical tests.

PRACTICAL TEST PHILOSOPHY

The Airman Certification Standards (ACS) publication has been created jointly by the FAA and industry and represents the FAA's standardized test for certification. The ACS is the essential part of the FAA's intent to assure the public of a fair and objective evaluation process. All FAA designated pilot examiners and FAA operations inspectors are required to test applicants in accordance with the procedures and standards shown in the ACS.

The ACS is the final step in the FAA certification process. It serves the dual purpose of determining that the applicant has completed the required training to a level of proficiency required by the FAA Administrator and that the applicant can safely perform the tasks required for the certificate or rating sought.

The philosophy of the practical test is to observe the applicant as he or she completes the routine, non-routine, and emergency tasks that are required of the applicant in order to operate safely in accordance with the certificate or rating being sought. Tasks are evaluated through oral questioning and observation of ground and flight procedures. Oral questioning may be used at any time throughout the test. Questions will always be of a practical nature and should generally be referenced to the respective sources shown in the ACS for the particular task. Evaluating pilot technique, procedures, or answers to oral questions, based on reference sources other than those shown in the ACS may be inappropriate and inconsistent with a sense of fairness to the applicant and the recommending instructor. Such procedures or questions should be avoided. Likewise, requiring an applicant to state seldom used aircraft limitations and procedures from memory, without the use of normally available placards, markings, and aircraft limitation material, is also inconsistent with the philosophy of a practical test. A sense of fairness to the public during the conduct of the practical test is of the very highest priority to the FAA.

The designated examiner's role is to fairly and objectively represent the FAA Administrator during an applicant's final evaluation process. This role requires the proper use by designated examiners of the ACS. The FAA believes that the ACS is the essential means toward the accomplishment of the desired objectives of fairness and objectivity. The FAA is dependent on the experience and integrity of the designated examiner in this area and expects fair and objective evaluation to a practical standard.

At anytime, an FAA inspector may observe your designated examiner performing your practical examination. Don't be alarmed, the FAA is there to observe and evaluate the designated examiner NOT you.

OUTCOMES OF A PRACTICAL TEST

There are three possible outcomes of a practical test:

- 1 – Your performance is satisfactory and a “Temporary Airman Certificate” is issued.
- 2 - Your performance is unsatisfactory and a “Notice of Disapproval” is issued. Retest must be done within 60 days of the initial test in order to receive credit for tasks performed satisfactorily during the initial test. Unsatisfactory or incomplete tasks must be satisfactorily completed during the retest.
- 3 – You cannot complete the test due to weather, mechanical issues, illness, etc., and a “Letter of Discontinuance” will be issued. Continuation of the exam must be done within 60 days of the initial test in order to receive credit for tasks performed satisfactorily during the initial discontinued test.

NOTE: If you must return to retest or continue the test, your knowledge exam must still be valid.

SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

- 1 – Maneuvers performed within ACS standards.
- 2 – Applicant demonstrates mastery of the aircraft.
- 3 – Outcome of maneuvers never seriously in doubt.
- 4 – Demonstration of satisfactory knowledge.
- 5 – Demonstration of satisfactory proficiency.
- 6 – Demonstration of sound judgment.
- 7 – Demonstration of single-pilot competence.
- 8 – Demonstration of resource management.

UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

- 1 – Any action that requires intervention by the examiner.
- 2 – Failure to maintain a safety-conscious attitude.
- 3 – Failure to follow the recommended basic operating procedures of the aircraft used.
- 4 – Exceeding aircraft limitations.
- 5 - Outcome of a task being seriously in doubt.
- 6 – Operation/maneuver not within the tolerances of the ACS.
- 7 – Failure to apply aeronautical knowledge.
- 8 – Failure to demonstrate mastery of the aircraft.
- 9 – Consistently exceeding tolerances/limits stated in the ACS.
- 10 – Failure to take prompt corrective action when tolerances are exceeded.
- 11 – Failure to demonstrate proficiency required for certificates or ratings already held.
- 12 – Failure to apply knowledge and skill to special emphasis areas listed in the ACS.

CHECKRIDE PROTOCOL

- 1 – If you fail any task within the ACS, the examiner will inform you and the test is unsatisfactory. You have the option to continue with the remainder of the test to complete remaining tasks. You will be given credit for any tasks that were performed satisfactorily. On retest, you might expect only those unsatisfactory tasks to be reexamined. However, you may be required to complete the entire test.
- 2 – Tasks are not allowed to be repeated. There are no second attempts for unsatisfactory performance of a task. If the maneuver is aborted due to traffic or other external factor, the examiner may allow the task to be repeated.
- 3 – Be sure that the aircraft flown for the practical test is airworthy and be prepared to show the examiner that it is.
- 4 – Remember that you are the PIC and the examiner should be treated as if only a non-pilot passenger. If it is unclear what roll the examiner is playing – ask.
- 5 – For greater efficiency, you may pre-flight the aircraft prior to the ground portion of the practical test but be prepared to review the aircraft pre-flight inspection with the examiner prior to the flight portion of the test.
- 6 – Verbalization of your processes during the any portion of the practical test keeps the examiner informed of what you are doing and will avoid unnecessary questioning by the examiner. For example, if you verbalize the checklist the examiner may determine that the appropriate checklist items have been completed.

CHECKRIDE TIPS

- 1 – Allow adequate time in your schedule for the checkride so you won't feel pressured by other commitments. Up to 6 hours (and possibly more) may be required to complete a practical test.
- 2 – Applicants must satisfactorily perform items in the ACS. You should thoroughly read and review the ACS and ask your instructor to explain any Area of Operation or Task that you do not completely understand. You are expected to be familiar with the performance standards contained within the ACS.
- 3 – Review with your instructor the Applicant's Practical Test Checklist contained within the ACS to ensure that you have met all requirements and bring all required equipment and records with you to the ground portion of the practical test.
- 4 – Be sure that you know how to **apply** the knowledge that you gained from your training. To a large extent, scenarios are used during the practical test to determine the applicant's correlative ability and decision-making process.
- 5 – Review your logbook or training record with your instructor to verify that you meet the qualifications and have required endorsements recorded. Because these requirements must be verified by the examiner prior to beginning the practical test, efficiency can be gained by completing the "Airman Experience Checklist" (attached).

- 6 – Review your FAA Form 8710-1 (IACRA preferred) with your instructor to ensure that it has been correctly completed. Your name on the knowledge test must exactly match your name on the application and other airman certificates held.
 - 7 – Get adequate rest prior to the practical test.
 - 8 – Because adequate nourishment is critical to performance, allow enough time to have a meal prior to the checkride and bring a snack with you to energize yourself between the ground and flight portion of the practical test.
 - 9 – During the practical test, think and act as if you already hold the certificate or rating for which you are applying. Act as if the examiner is a non-pilot passenger. Behave as the commander of the ship. Never defer to the examiner and ask what to do in a situation.
 - 10 – Be prepared to answer questions in relation to aeronautical charts and operations from other parts of the country. Answer question with common sense and simple responses. Do not try to read into the examiners questions and answer what you THINK the examiner wants to hear.
 - 11 – Have the assigned trip planning prepared including weather information being used for planning the trip, an appropriate navigation log, flight plan, and aircraft performance data, including the weight and balance calculation, takeoff, cruise and landing.
 - 12 – There are no secrets concerning the practical test. If the applicant or recommending instructor has questions concerning the administration of the practical test they should contact the examiner for clarification.
 - 13 - Contact the examiner the evening prior to the test to confirm your appointment.
- Relax, be confident, and know that you are ready to handle any situation at any time.