

Checkride Tips

10 Things Pilots can do to stack the deck in their favor

By: Mike Shiflett – Designated Pilot Examiner

1. Concentrate on the Oral portion of the test. Most pilots put too much emphasis on the flying skills and not nearly enough on the ground training. The flight portion of the test is highly predictable whereas the oral portion can vary a lot depending upon how you answer or don't answer a question. **The direction of the oral in both length and scope depends upon what you know and how you apply your knowledge.** The flight portion rarely changes as a steep turn is still a steep turn no matter who tests it.
2. Come in with the paperwork completed correctly, the airplane logbooks reviewed and your flight times, endorsements etc. all absolutely verified. When a pilot examiner shows up for a test they expect to do the test. When you're not eligible due to something you should have known everyone loses.
3. Preflight the Airplane ahead of time. Go out and do a thorough preflight. You can save a lot of time by fueling up now, checking and adding oil, having maintenance change a bad tire etc. way in advance of the flight test start time. You'll still have to do a preflight as part of your test but you'll know already that the airplane is ready to go. So this all means that you should reserve your airplane an hour or so before the agreed starting time of the test, not just the flight portion, and have it for at least an hour after the estimated finish time.
4. Have any Pre-Assigned work done. Have your cross country flight navigation log, flight plan, and any pre assigned performance calculations done at least an hour before the agreed start time. Don't underestimate the amount of time you think you'll need to do this. Do some the night before and make sure you have plenty of time to finish it. For added accuracy take your flight plan as you planned it when you're done and run a DUAT Flight plan against it to check for errors.

5. Don't rely on passing your knowledge test as an indicator to the examiner that you already know the ground material. Remember it's not really a test if you are provided with the test questions and answers. It's an exercise. I personally look at the results check the score and the date you took the test. I use this benchmark – If you took the test a long time ago and got a low score, I figure that you maybe didn't understand the material very well then, maybe you were in your first few flights etc. Lots of good reasons for a lower score. However, if you got a low score and took the test very close to the checkride it means to me you are running out of time. It means you are cramming and trying to rush things. It probably means your knowledge is not adequate. After all how can you get a low score on a test that gives you the test questions and answers for you to study? Remember that written test preparation is an exercise. Anyone who thinks a weekend accelerated pass your written prepares you for the practical test is someone who is probably not going to pass the oral portion of the test. Now having said that written test software, videos and weekend courses are fine for doing the job of passing the test with a good score. Nothing more Nothing less. In our Private Pilot Course we build in the FAA Exam Preparation modules with study sessions, stage exams and sample FAA tests. We don't pretend to teach you aeronautical knowledge and have it measured by your FAA written test score. Of course you'll score high on the test. But it's what is in our course that makes the difference. It's complete training for Aeronautical Knowledge, FAA Exam Preparation and Checkride Preparation. All three components are covered in our DVD or Online Course. Check it out at <http://www.pilottraining.com>
6. Don't study the night before. Only do some light reading and keeping the memorized items still memorized. Remember that if you're still learning this stuff the night before you really aren't giving yourself enough time to actually apply it and move it into long term memory.
7. Set the tone of the test by nailing the ground portion. The entire tone of the flight test is set by how well you do on the ground portion. When people are on the border, we have to continue testing until we're sure. That means that I've got to set up scenarios in flight to test what I'm not sure are adequate on the ground. So you've just set yourself up for a more difficult test. **If it's plain that you aren't meeting the standard on the ground then we don't even get to fly.** So now imagine a person who really does well on the ground. Completes it in reasonable time and answers things in a comprehensive practical manner. Now the flight test is pretty much routine and there is a feeling that the person can think, make good decisions, apply his knowledge etc. You have just set the stage to pre dispose the examiner do a normal test without adding scenarios that were weak on the ground.

8. If you know you can't do a flight task consistently then you are not ready for the checkride. Remember that the Practical Test Standard (PTS) is the minimum standard that the FAA has set. It's not an average. You must train to a standard that is higher than the PTS to allow you to slide a little due to nerves and other circumstances. Consistent within standard flying is your measure as to when you are ready to take the Practical Test (Checkride)
9. Do some ground work on your Pilot Examiner. Don't strive to know what he or she is going to ask you as if you were looking for a script. Instead try to find out how the Examiner tests. What kind of scenario testing is being done? If you have to know the answers to the oral exam ahead of time then again it's not a test. Fortunately the FAA doesn't publish our test questions. It's only important to find out which are areas the individual examiner will likely emphasize. Then you can optimize your final preparation around the test. I have my own checkride preparation website that you can use for free. Just go to <http://www.checkrides.com> On my site I give you an idea of how a test is done and go through the paperwork and the common areas.
10. Don't take the advice of "never offer anything or say anything other than what the examiner asks during the test". The only people who need to be taking this advice are people who are not prepared adequately. If you are truly prepared you will know all of the questions put to you, you'll be able to solve any scenario and you can fill in extra information if you want to make it dead clear to your examiner that you really do know. Knowledge is Power, and if you have the right training materials and a good flight instructor you should be able to ace the oral portion by just knowing what you have learned. In our DVD and Online Course you'll be taught by watching fully narrated presentations, see and use the best flash animations ever created for general aviation, be directed on exactly what to read in the Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge (The FAA's Official Handbook and the BASIS OF EVERY ORAL EXAM AREA IN THE PRACTICAL TEST STANDARD) and you'll be able to create FAA test question study sessions and sample tests. In addition we created our own questions at the end of most lessons. There are over 500 non FAA questions to really let you know how you've mastered the material. Knowledge truly is Power and a Knowledgeable pilot is a more Competent and SAFER Pilot. Take a sample lesson on our website at <http://www.pilottraining.com>