

Commercial Pilot Checkride with Scott Rohlfing

Oral

Friend walks in and asks to pay me money to fly him somewhere in his plane. Can I do it.

I fly somewhere and strobe light is inop. Can I replace it? Do I need to make the maintenance log entry immediately? Obviously I would likely not have the maintenance logs with me in this situation, so impossible to make the log entry at that time.

We fly at an altitude that will need some supplemental oxy. Can I grab grandma's oxygen bottle and take it with me on the flight to use it as the required supplemental oxygen?

We went through my entire planned cross country. He was not happy with flying through high Sierras in the 7GCAA. Also definitely emphasized making manual compass heading computations (and not relying on Foreflight plan). Scott emphasized that part of the test is pure dead reckoning. I actually had to turn off the GPS in foreflight for the cross country test part, as well as disable the moving map on the Garmin in the airplane.

At one point whilst talking through my cross country flight there was also a question of finding your way when lost (the answer is to use two VORs to triangulate your position).

Another part of talking through my cross country was talking about the weather briefing. I mentioned getting a Standard briefing on the phone and also through Foreflight. We went through it on my iPad. At one point he asked about some wacky METAR with remarks section containing a AO2 and a SLP... and also a sequence of three long numbers. I was allowed to look in the Aviation Services book.

Then there was the airspace. Starting out of Van Nuys in LA and travelling straight to an uncontrolled airport south of LA. The thought exercise was going through all the airspace along the way and listing their VFR minimums, entry and communications requirements as well as ADSB out and transponder requirements.

Then there were the airport taxiway markings. Do not confuse the protected area with edge of taxiway markings.

Flying

Replanned a short cross country, making the compass heading and leg duration calculations on the E6B. Planned it to Turlock.

Initially did not really factor in the taxi and climb fuel burn. Scott was not happy about it. I also did not calculate the short leg from PAO to the Dumbarton. Scott also not happy about that. I had to give him a number - 2 mins to get from PAO to the bridge.

Did a normal take off and then pure dead reckoning flying up until half way between the mineral plant and KTCY. Was told I had to be hitting my times within 3 minutes in order to pass. We actually only flew through 2 of my waypoints — the Dumbarton and Mineral Plant, and then only halfway to KTCY.

At that point I was told I could reenable GPS in Foreflight as well as the plane's Garmin.

Was given a diversion to Concorde for medical emergency. Could use Foreflight or Garmin for that. Used Garmin as my iPad was still booting up I think (or the Foreflight ownship thing was still disabled?).

Then steep turns left and right. Actually took me a bit to position myself in the practice area over a golf course there. I was not happy with the traffic I was seeing on Foreflight.

Then a Chandelle, only one. Wasn't given the direction. Then slow flight. Was given target speed 55 mph. And actually was ok to fly with stall horn on. In fact he hastily reiterated that he GAVE ME 55 mph, when I briefly tried to avoid flying with the stall horn.

Then power off stall, power on stall, and accelerated stall. The power on and off were to a full break. Accelerated was recover at first sign, which was the stall horn.

Then there was an emergency descent due to fire. Which I did initialized with a bank (to the left). Stopped at 3200 ft.

Then was told to go to nearest public airport. I went to LVK. Not sure if he was hoping to see me use the NRST GPS feature, which I did not do, but that did not seem an issue.

At LVK we did soft field landing, soft field take off. Power off approach. Short field take off. Power off 180 accuracy. Short field landing. Did a go around at the last moment for the short field landing as was set too high all the way and that was an OK thing to do.

Second attempt at short field landing worked fine.

It was somewhat thermally, making it difficult to make the accuracy landings — short field and the power off 180 accuracy, but it worked out fine.

Then we made left 45 departure and flew to KNUQs to do 8s on pylons. Apparently I made all technical parts correctly, but did not really make an illusion of the wing being attached to the pylon. Again, the fact that it was all technically correct made it OK.

From there back to KPAO. Tower already closed. Pattern very busy. Had to widen out base. Plane in front went around so that left plenty of space.

Final item was an accuracy wheel landing — on the numbers. It worked out although I ended up a bit slow, so at final stage had to force the nose down to **not** make it a 3 pt landing. **NOTE:** Remember to practice **accuracy wheel as well as 3 pt** landings!

Then uneventful taxi back and the final test was securing the plane using the checklist. Scott made a point that people can often fail on that last part, just by not taking securing the plane seriously (I am paraphrasing), or by failing to use a checklist.

Actually Scott made the point in the beginning that using checklists was a required part of the test, so I was pulling it out for every part of the flight. Checkmate checklist was fine.

At that point he said the official words that the checkride was concluded. The temp certificate was printed out on his portable printer.

Closing thoughts

Throughout the checkride Scott was mostly friendly. He did not try to “stump the expert”. Questions were straightforward and nothing unexpected really.