

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.

Can I advertise my flying services? Can I offer to be someone's pilot at the airport? (Yes)

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.

Answered as discussed with Lou (write entry on paper and stick in when getting back). I said I'd take it to a shop to do it though (sensible)

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?

Know exactly why you can't use the other types of oxygen (memory says medical oxygen has water content and can freeze at altitude and welders oxygen isn't pure but check that)

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.

I planned to North Las Vegas, route went south through Trona Gap. Planned stop in Porterville for gas. Do a full hand done nav log. I found ACA performance numbers rather pessimistic and was getting ahead of schedule. Make sure to plan slow climbs past 5000 ft (climb performance turns to shit). Scott wanted Foreflight ownship + breadcrumbs off but I forgot to turn glide advisor off so it kinda showed where I was the entire time.

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).

I told him every single way to get yourself unlost and then some but he was looking for me to say slow down to conserve fuel and circle

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.

You'll go through a standard weather briefing. Be able to read and explain everything. Metars and tafs in raw form. He picked longest TAF (Fresno) and got me to read it. Be able to read the expanded temp and dewpoint numbers (he was impressed by that). Be able to explain the weather associated with a high and low pressure zone and warm and cold front. Ideally troughs aswell. Some wiggle room there but definitely at least know the name of every single symbol on the prog chart. Basically just get a bunch of wx briefings in the lead up to the test and make sure you can answer every question askable about all of them.

Then there was the airspaces. 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 airspaces along the way and listing their VFR minimums, entry and communications requirements as well as ADSB out and transponder requirements.

He picked French valley as his airport. Basically said imagine you are at 3000 ft (asked the question a couple times with different altitudes) and fly in a straight line to French valley, explain all airspace you go into and wx mins and xpdr/adsb reqs. Have a look at the mountains on the way and think about the question as if you were at an altitude to only clear the mountain by 10 feet.

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

He's gonna pull out a bunch of photos of airport markings. KNOW ABSOLUTELY ALL OF THEM. ILS critical, taxiway hold short, runway hold short, marker, stopway, displaced threshold, taxiway aligned with runway (as at palo alto), and all the others I'm forgetting

Learn everything you possibly can about pressurization systems and when supplemental oxygen is required to be used/available for both part 91 and 135.

Understand MELs for Part 135 ops.

Memorize hazardous attitudes and fixes

Know what would happen if static ports/pitot tubes were clogged (eg what indicates during climb if static port is clogged etc.)

He asked what I'd do in the event of electrical failure and liked when I grabbed the checklist

He asked how I could know how much fuel I had at any time. The answer is look at your flight plan and it'll tell you. He played really stupid games with me about this question. I basically said that if you've flown according to how you planned, then you will know how much fuel you have but that somehow wasn't explicit enough.

Flying

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

Never did this because I did hand nav log first time. Genuinely think Scott would've been pissed if I hadn't.

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.

Didn't do this

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.

My waypoints were vpbdx, vpcoy, vpmn, the star wars field, then the intersection of I5 and I580. He called it quits and star wars field. He said that I had to be within 3 min total off from original ETA at every waypoint. I arrived at star wars field like 2:45 before I

estimated and he was okay with that. It might be possible to update eta enroute but idk.

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

True

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?).

Just use the Foreflight two finger measure thing and tell scott what it says (turn in the rough direction of the field first).

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.

If you're at an altitude/position you don't like (or would prefer to be elsewhere), just tell scott and do it; he's fine with it.

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.

Asked me what speed I wanted to be at. I said 60 so we did that. Pretty easy. Never did a chandelle but did lazy eights, steep turns, stalls. Never did turns around a point (memory is slightly foggy but pretty sure it never happened).

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.

I practiced accel stalls to full break but ACS says recover at first sign. When I asked which he wanted he made me pull up the ACS (which I had downloaded on FF) and look.

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

I was banking back and forth to keep going in roughly the same direction but he said afterwards he thought it was weird. Not against rules though. Talk to Lou for more info

on what he said.

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.

Said some crap about needing an airport with crossing runways due to wind (there was none) so we went to Tracy (he was making excuses to force us to Tracy, not sure why, could've known I practiced at LVK a lot or could've just been busy at LVK)

Also make sure you're familiar with correct traffic pattern entries for non towered airports.

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.

Got me to do wheel landing as first landing but expect to do it at palo alto at the end. Said I'm the only person he's ever had do a wheel landing not at home airport. We did power off approach before power off 180 accuracy. Use it as a practice for the 180. I didn't even know it was coming. And obviously don't mess up and aim for exactly the touchdown spot he gives doing 180 accuracy instead of aiming for 200 ft prior. Imagine how embarrassing it would be messing that up after practicing it 40 something times.

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.

We had absolutely zero wind

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 made an illusion of the wing being attached to the pylon. Again, the fact that it was all technically correct made it OK.

He wanted to do pylons out near tracy but I wanted to go to KNUQ cus I practiced there. Just my luck PGE decided to do powerline patrol that day so KNUQ told me to get lost. Scott laughed but we turned around and did them right by the mineral plant. No wind so no too difficult plus he was messing with his ipad during my one bad turn.

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.

Soft field at palo alto, pretty crap but passable. Just do the technique.

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!

400 ft tolerance on wheel landing. Other landings all to super tight tolerances (I forget what they were but Lou probably remembers)(we realized we were basically practicing everything to twice the allowable tolerance)

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.

He left pretty fast after we got on the ground but still, hes the type of guy to grab binoculars and watch you from the club house so do it right.

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.

Ya, use lots of checklists.

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.

Text or call me if you have any questions or anything doesn't make sense. Good luck. Let's go flying sometime when I'm back in the US.