

Private Pilot Check Ride prep

Once you are done reading the PHAK and AFH (or any other ground school), it is time to review and prepare for the check ride.

Read the [Airmen Certification Standards](#), anything on the ACS is fair game on the check ride!

Any subject matter that you do not understand, and unable to have a discussion on you should revisit and study. Same for the maneuvers, make sure you can fly to check ride standards consistently.

[Private Pilot Stage Check Oral Guide](#) (PDF)

[DPE talks about common errors by private pilot applicants](#) (Youtube Video)

[Oral Exam Guide: Private Pilot](#) (Book). Also available for free from HooplaDigital with library card.

[Tips to pass the check ride, and study resources by /u/yyhufo](#) (Website)

[More /r/flying check ride gauges and writeups](#) (Website)

[*Day of check ride checklist*](#)

The following is advice for the check ride created by Ron Levy.

1. Relax and enjoy it. Nationwide, about 90% of applicants pass on the first try, so look around and see if you think you're as good as 9 out of 10 other students. Also, your instructor must maintain a pass rate of at least 80% to get his ticket renewed, so he's not going to send you up unless he's pretty darn sure you'll pass – otherwise, he has to find four other people to pass to make up for you, and that's not always easy.
2. Go over with your instructor the logbooks of the aircraft you're going to use the day BEFORE the check ride to make sure it's all in order (annual, transponder checks, ELT ops and battery, 100-hour if rented, etc.). If the airplane's paper busts, so do you. Run a sample W&B, too – get the examiner's weight when you make the appointment. If you weigh 200, and so does the examiner, don't show up with a C-152 with full tanks and a 350 lb available cabin load – examiners can't waive max gross weight limits.
3. Relax.
4. Rest up and get a good night's sleep the night before. Don't stay up "cramming."
5. Relax.
6. Read carefully the ENTIRE ACS including all the introductory material. Use the checklist in the back to make sure you take all the stuff you need -- papers and equipment. And the examiner's fee UP FRONT (too much chance a disgruntled applicant will refuse to pay afterward) in the form demanded by the examiner is a "required document" from a practical, if not FAA, standpoint.
7. Relax.
8. You're going to make a big mistake somewhere. The examiner knows this will happen, and it doesn't have to end the ride. What's important is not whether you make a mistake, but how you deal with it – whether you recover and move on without letting it destroy your flying. Figure out where you are now, how to get to where you want to be, and then do what it takes to get there. That will save your check ride today and your butt later.
9. Relax.
10. You're going to make some minor mistakes. Correct them yourself in a timely manner "so the outcome of the maneuver is never seriously in doubt" and you'll be OK. If you start to go high on your first steep turn and start a correction as you approach 100 feet high but top out at 110 high while making a smooth correction back to the requested altitude, don't sweat -- nail the next one and you'll pass with "flying colors" (a naval term, actually). If you see the maneuver will exceed parameters and not be smoothly recoverable, tell the examiner and knock it off before you go outside those parameters, and then re-initiate. That shows great sense, if not great skill, and judgement is the most critical item on the check ride.
11. Relax.
12. During the oral, you don't have to answer from memory anything you'd have time to look up in reality. You never need to memorize and know everything. Categorize material as:
 - A. Things you must memorize (i.e. emergency procedures, radio calls, airspace, etc).
 - B. Things you must know or have reasonable understanding of (i.e. interpreting weather codes, non-critical regs).
 - C. Things you know about but can look up and will have time to look up on the ground.

(Thanks to Mark Bourdeaux for this categorization.) So, if the examiner asks you about currency, it's OK to open the FAR book to 61.56 and 61.57 and explain them to him. But make sure you know where the answer is without reading the whole FAR/AIM cover-to-cover. On the other hand, for stuff you'd have to know RIGHT NOW (e.g., best glide speed for engine failure, etc.), you'd best not stumble or stutter – know that stuff cold. Also, remember that the examiner will use the areas your knowledge test report says you missed as focus points in the oral, so study them extra thoroughly.

13. Relax.

14. Avoid this conversation: Examiner - Q: Do you have a pencil? Applicant - A: I have a #2, a mechanical, a red one... Examiner - Q: Do you have a pencil? Applicant - A: I also have an assortment of pens, and some highlighters... Examiner - Q: Do you have a pencil? Applicant - A: Yes. Examiner - Thank you. One of the hardest things to do when you're nervous and pumped up is to shut up and answer the question. I've watched people talk themselves into a corner by incorrectly answering a question that was never asked, or by adding an incorrect appendix to the correct answer to the question that was. If the examiner wants more, he'll tell you.

15. Relax

16. Some questions are meant simply to test your knowledge, not your skill, even if they sound otherwise. If the examiner asks how far below the cloud deck you are, he is checking to see if you know the answer is "at least 500 feet," not how good your depth perception is. He can't tell any better than you can, and the only way to be sure is to climb up and see when you hit the bases, which for sure he won't let you do.

17. Relax

18. Remember the first rule of Italian driving: "What's behind me is not important." Don't worry about how you did the last maneuver or question. If you didn't do it well enough, the examiner must notify you and terminate the check ride. If you are on the next one, forget the last one because it was good enough to pass. Focus on doing that next maneuver or answering the next question the best you can, because while it can still determine whether you pass or fail, the last one can't anymore. If you get back to the office and he hasn't said you failed, smile to your friends as you walk in because you just passed.

19. Relax and enjoy your new license.

Ron Levy, ATP, CFI, Veteran of 11 license/rating check rides, including 4 with FAA inspectors