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CFI NOTES >>>

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LETTERS

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—Editor

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3
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—Moshe Braner

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—The Editor



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HACK THE JASON BLAIR CHECKRIDE

TRICKS THAT APPLICANTS & INSTRUCTORS PLAY

HERE IS AN IDEA: EXPLAIN EACH THING THAT YOU KNOW WELL, VERY, VERY, VERY THOROUGHLY, AND TAKE UP AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE SO THE EXAMINER CAN'T ASK AS MANY QUESTIONS.

CHECKRIDE DAY CAN BE A TOUGH DAY. SO, WHY NOT TRY A FEW TRICKS THAT WILL MAKE THE checkride go easier for you or your student? The designated pilot examiner (DPE) won't really notice that you are trying to trick them, right?

Well, trick may not necessarily be the right word for it, but there are things that I and many other DPEs have seen flight students and flight instructors do to "hack" the checkride and try to gain a little advantage. Take a look.

SHORT-FUEL THE AIRPLANE

If the plane has a limited amount of fuel in it, the flight portion of the practical test must get shorter, right? Seriously, I have had applicants do this...you know...only for weight and balance reasons. Please, make sure the aircraft is sufficiently fueled to be within weight and balance and have enough fuel to complete all the required tasks of the test with a good margin of fuel endurance left over when you expect to land.

SCHEDULE MULTIPLE EXAMINERS AS BACKUPS

The weather isn't always going to cooperate on the day you have the test scheduled, so why not schedule multiple examiners on multiple days?

This may sound like a good idea, but it's not. While examiners do talk with each other it is simply best to not take up spots on examiners' schedules that you may not be using. It will result in last minute cancellations that don't allow examiners to fill those slots with other applicants that are ready. The result is that fewer people overall get tests done and it creates backups in checkride scheduling for everyone!

RUN THE EXAMINER OUT OF TIME

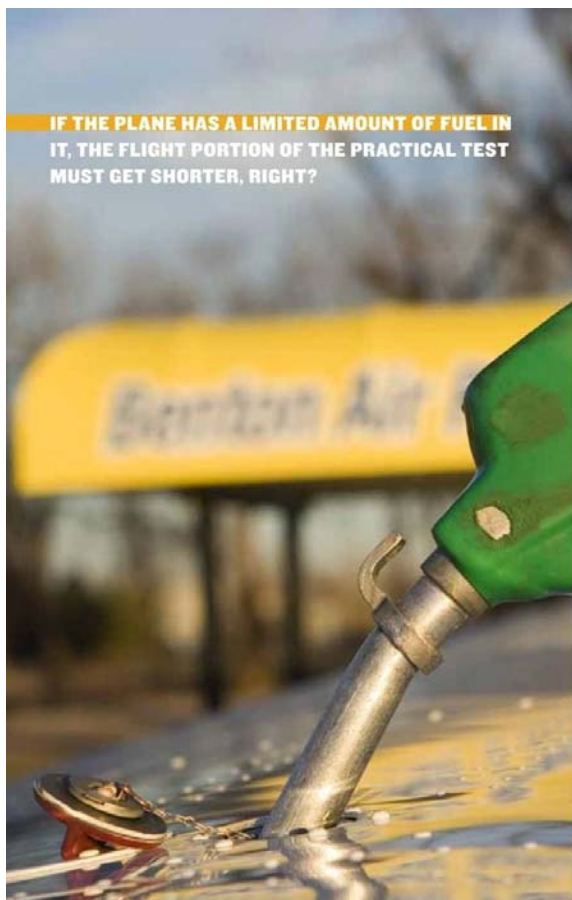
Here is an idea: Explain each thing that you know well, very, very, very thoroughly, and take up as much time as possible so the examiner can't ask as many questions. Some instructors promote this strategy for their students. It just results in very, very, very long tests that put

everyone behind schedule. The examiner has a specific list of items that must be covered (in the ACS or PTS) and he or she can't cut this short, even if you take 45 minutes to explain how the brakes work on the plane. I am not saying to avoid being thorough, but you don't have to speak in slow motion or tell us the name of the brake pad factory line worker who made the parts.

SCHEDULE LATER IN THE DAY, LET ONCOMING NIGHT SHORTEN THE FLIGHT

Some instructors and applicants try to schedule tests late in the day with a minimum amount of time before it will get dark to get the examiner to hurry through the ground portion—a part that scares many applicants—and onto the flight. The thought is that the impending fall of night will result in a shorter overall test.

Instead, what typically happens is that the applicant ends up completing the end of the



IF THE PLANE HAS A LIMITED AMOUNT OF FUEL IN IT, THE FLIGHT PORTION OF THE PRACTICAL TEST MUST GET SHORTER, RIGHT?

test in the dusk, or even worse, in the dark. This can make it pretty hard to complete ground reference maneuvers or performance landings. It's not a big deal for an instrument checkride in a well-lit aircraft, but for most tests that include visual maneuvers, it doesn't turn out all that well for the applicant. Like the earlier point, the examiner has a specific list of required tasks to be completed.

FEED THEM COFFEE

Seriously, I know instances where the examiner is fed coffee on purpose to allow nature to take its course and cause the DPE to visit a restroom after drinking too much coffee. This means that the applicant will have some breaks when the examiner leaves for a few moments, perhaps allowing them to look up some items during the time the examiner is gone. Additionally, since most training aircraft don't have a bathroom on-board, the conventional wisdom is that too much coffee translates to a shorter flight.

I would like to tell you that examiners can avoid this temptation, but I think there is something in the FAA examiner training that makes most of us unable to turn down (even bad) coffee when offered. However, that doesn't mean

the test is going to get shorter. Something all DPEs learn is to be able to drink cup after cup after cup, and not need to visit a bathroom like normal human beings. It is like examiner superpower! OK, maybe that isn't entirely true, but if too much coffee does catch up with us, most examiners are more than willing to stop, take a bio-break, and continue testing beyond that break.

All of these "hacks" are things that fellow examiners and I have seen tried by applicants or recommended by instructors to their students. I am sure there are many more gimmicks out there, but whether these or others, the reality is that if you are counting on a trick to give you the upper edge on a test, you probably aren't really ready. Don't "game" the test: Prepare for it, perform it well, and succeed!

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