

From the Editors of

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FLIGHT SCHOOL BUSINESS



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Recent experience a major factor in checkride success

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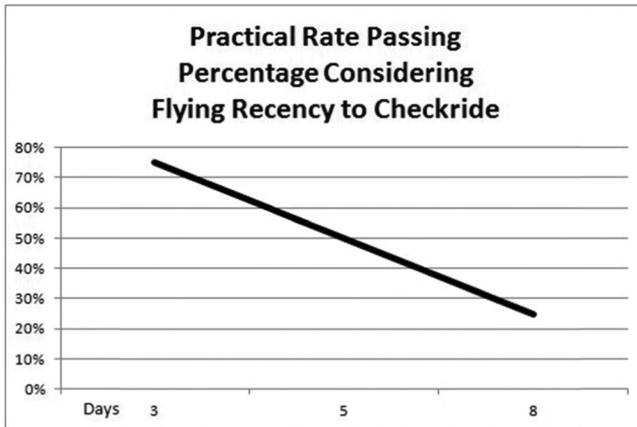
Anecdotally as an FAA designated pilot examiner I know that the longer it has been between when an applicant flew and when they take the checkride, the greater the possibility that their skills will have a little rust. More rust equals a greater chance of failure. I know this in my gut, but until recently, I didn't have any data to back it up.

Now I do.

After talking with two very large flight training providers, and without breaking down practical tests by any particular rating or certificate, it became obvious that the more recent a pilot had flown before his or her practical test, the more likely he or she was to pass.

In fact, the numbers were almost scary.

When a pilot has not flown for more than three days prior to taking the practical test, the schools noticed that the pass rate for tests went down to 75 percent. When more than five days had elapsed, it went down to 50 percent. And if more than 8 days had passed, the success rate was a mere 25 percent.



Wow.

What does this mean for businesses providing flight training? It means that a simple way to increase the success rate of your clients is to ensure they don't go to a practical test with a coating of rust on their skills.

When a student is signed off and ready to take a checkride, an instructor has completed much of his duties. He has prepared a student, helped him gain skills, helped him learn, helped him complete requirements the FAA has set forth as prerequisites for a practical test. But his duty doesn't stop there. We certainly hope any pilot who has been trained will be skilled and knowledgeable enough to continue to meet a minimum standard for some time, but it is an instructor's obligation to do all he can to ensure success.

This data shows that the simple practice of ensuring the applicant fly soon before taking a practical test is a simple way to increase the likelihood of success.

I know that practical tests get delayed or postponed for many reasons. Weather doesn't always cooperate, family obligations create delays, and aircraft maintenance creates unexpected holdups. If an applicant encounters one of these delays and then asks to not reschedule until he or she has had another opportunity to fly either on her own or with her instructor, I will always be willing to accept and even commend this decision. Examiners want to see pilots do the right things, make good decisions (and making sure they are good current pilots is certainly a good decision), and to pass their practical tests.

Flight schools and flight instructors can help reduce the risk of failure due to rusty skills by doing the following:

- Schedule a final flight review within three days of a practical test;
- If a delay is experienced prior to an applicant taking a practical test, work with the examiner to reschedule at a time that allows another review flight to be completed;

- Encourage students to fly before their practical test to fight off any rust, or even just to quell any test jitters before flying with the examiner.

These may seem like simple things, but it is very easy for them to be skipped.

Every applicant and his instructor want to get the test done, but being a good pilot in command (or instructor making sure that the applicant is setting themselves up for the best opportunity to pass) means making good decisions. That decision-making process is something that any examiner worth his or her salt should respect and value.