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DON'T FORGET TO LOG THE GROUND TRAINING

KEEP YOUR STUDENTS ON TRACK FOR THE CHECK RIDE

BY JASON BLAIR



Date	Make and Model of Aircraft	Instructor's Signature	No.
4/29/14	Cessna 172	J. J. Laver	987654
4/25/14	Cessna 152	J. J. Laver	98654

“ALRIGHT, NOW PLEASE SHOW ME THE LOG OF GROUND INSTRUCTION THAT YOU HAVE IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR CFI CERTIFICATE,” I SAID TO THE APPLICANT.

Greeted with a quizzical look, he said, “I don’t have a specific log of any ground training. We just logged the flight time and did the endorsements.”

OK, so here is where I must give him the bad news. “I am sorry, but without that, I am unable to give you a practical test today.”

I would like to tell you that this is a unique occurrence, but it happens quite a lot.

Specifically, asking the question of what is required when qualifying an applicant for a CFI initial practical test, a fellow examiner sought help from our local FAA office who pushed the question up the chain a little further and got the following response from the FAA’s AFS-810 staff:

“Within 14 CFR 61.185(a), you will see that it states that a CFI applicant must ‘receive and log’ ground training in the fundamentals of instruction. An endorsement alone will not

suffice to satisfy this requirement. It must be treated the same as flight training—an endorsement alone for a checkride would not suffice without the underlying logged flight time to satisfy the requirements.”

For all practical purposes, with this interpretation resting in our mutual DPE email boxes, it means that we will not be giving practical tests without a log of ground training that covers the required ground training areas for a CFI initial applicant.

I highlight this instance, partially to inform, but also to remind and encourage instructors to do a better job of logging ground training that they conduct.

In reality, it shouldn’t be a surprise to any savvy CFI that they should be logging ground training conducted, but many of us get sloppy with this over time. While I highlight the requirement here for a CFI candidate, it really isn’t any different for other ratings and certificates. 14 CFR 61.105, which covers private pilot aeronautical knowledge, includes the language that “a person applying for a private pilot certificate

must receive and log ground training from an authorized instructor or complete a home study course on the aeronautical subject areas...” The same holds true under 14 CFR 61.65 (b) for an instrument rating which also includes the language that “a person who applies for an instrument rating must have received and logged ground training...”

It’s in all of them, and to be honest, the FAA and DPEs have probably been a little lax historically in their requirement of a true log of ground training received for applicants on practical tests. Going forward, based on many recent FAA interpretations and instructions given to DPEs, just having an endorsement that says a candidate got the training isn’t going to be enough for most practical test eligibility.

So, what should a good CFI be doing to track a student’s ground training lessons? Well, it depends on if you are operating in a collegiate environment, a Part 141 training operation, somewhere that has a good robust syllabus and debriefing process, or on your own training a private client.

OK, SO HERE IS WHERE I MUST GIVE HIM THE BAD NEWS. “I AM SORRY, BUT WITHOUT THAT, I AM UNABLE TO GIVE YOU A PRACTICAL TEST TODAY.”



In more structured training environments the ability to track progress can be more easily managed. Full-blown academy or collegiate style programs will typically use lesson plans, syllabi, and course completion documentation. In most cases, this is sufficient to track a student's progress, and it could be referenced if any questions arise about topical areas covered, how much time it took, and when it was covered. It gets more difficult when these tools are not available.

Unlike the basic pilot logbooks that we use to track pilot experience and training time, we don't really have similar logbooks for tracking ground training. A few logbooks have a couple of rudimentary pages at the back for some notes of ground training, but they don't really offer enough space to track all the ground training for even one, let alone multiple ratings and certificates that many pilots who are pursuing

career track training will need to have records of for the practical tests.

But this also doesn't mean that your tracking of a student's ground training has to be done in a traditional logbook either.

I use a spreadsheet I have developed that includes all the required training for the certificate or rating I am working on with a client. It ends up being a log of activity by the time I am ready to sign them off and it is something I can print off and send along with the student to their practical test. I know instructors that are diligent about putting notes and comments in every invoice or receipt they give the customer at the end of the lesson—keeping a copy for themselves—that ends up building a folder of lesson activity and tracking the ground training conducted. Some instructors use diary style books that they write in for each student at the end of a lesson that can in essence

become a diary of ground training and a secondary book the student will keep in addition to their flight logbook.

What form the logging takes is less important than the fact that it's done and available to qualify an applicant for a practical test. Use what works best for you and your students but use something.

A secondary question that comes with this routinely is, "What should I include in the ground training log?"

Well, you don't need to write a book from every lesson, but even a list of the subject areas that you covered, how much time you spent, what day it took place, and your standard CFI signature is a pretty good start. This allows you to track how much ground time you have spent and what knowledge areas you have covered. It can help you make sure you cover them all—looking back

FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, WITH THIS INTERPRETATION RESTING IN OUR MUTUAL DPE EMAIL BOXES, IT MEANS THAT WE WILL NOT BE GIVING PRACTICAL TESTS WITHOUT A LOG OF GROUND TRAINING THAT COVERS THE REQUIRED GROUND TRAINING AREAS FOR A CFI INITIAL APPLICANT.

through the record to see if you missed any—and it can help you document the value of the ground training you are providing your client. It also helps your customers better value the time you spend with them on the ground if they have a record of the work you did with them that they can refer to; something for which you should definitely be billing them.

With that said, now that you have read this and been reminded, there is no excuse for your students to show up to practical tests and not have logged ground training toward the rating or certificate for which they will be testing. And hopefully, there will be no reason for the examiner to send them home just because you haven't done your job as a CFI documenting the required ground training.

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