



CFI to CFI

ASI's Newsletter for the Serious Flight Instructor | Vol. 11 Issue 1

CFI NOTES >>>

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NOTES

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CFI APPLICANTS

TEACHING THE TEACHER

BY JASON BLAIR

CFI PRACTICAL TESTS (CHECKRIDES) ARE CERTAINLY SOME OF THE MOST TAXING TESTS FOR BOTH THE APPLICANTS AND THE EXAMINER.

They are long, there is a significant amount of information to cover, and there is no doubt they are stressful for the applicants.

As a DPE who conducts these tests, I have seen a few really great applicants, lots of mediocre ones, and without a doubt a few that needed some more work before they were ready to head off into the world of providing instruction. With that said, just knowing how to be a "right seat pilot" isn't what it takes to be a good, or even better, a great CFI. It takes being a teacher. And those qualities are exemplified in a different way than just being a good commercial pilot.

Thinking back on some of the CFI practical tests I have given, I thought it might be interesting, potentially even helpful for those seeking to complete their CFI certificates, to share a few highlights from some of the best.

SETUP AND RESOURCES

I like to relay a story that exemplifies this concept.

At the same flight school, and less than a week apart, I had two different CFI candidates. One, the first one, got it. The second one didn't, yet.

When I arrived for the first CFI ride, I asked if we were going to be using the usual office I use for practical tests at the site. The CFI applicant said, "No, I have set us up to use a classroom, so we have some more resources while we do the test."

Intrigued, we switched buildings, and I found he had set up the room with a whiteboard that he used during the test to draw and explain things and an Apple TV he used to project things to the overhead projector to a screen on the wall. He showed things related to cross-country planning from his iPad to the screen, had some videos he used to describe systems, and pulled up airport charts to describe taxi diagrams and runway incursion avoidance lessons. He was using his resources to teach me acting as a student.

Less than a week later I went to the same location for another CFI ride and asked the same question. "Are we going to use the office for the test?"

The applicant's response was, "No, I heard you like to use the classroom, so let's go over there."

OK, the word was out. Right? He must be going to teach the same way.

But he didn't.

He didn't use any of those resources.

In fact, he actually asked me at one point, "Is there anything you want to use the projector for?"

I responded, "Well, gee, aren't you the instructor presenting things?"

See the difference?

One of these two passed on the first try. I think you can figure out which one.

I tell this story to make the point that setting up a space with resources can really be a benefit, or it can just be a waste of time if an applicant doesn't know how to use them or incorporate them into the demonstrated teaching on the CFI practical test.

The savviest of CFI candidates I have seen have used things like a computer and projector, an Apple TV to a projector or even just a TV screen or bigger computer monitor, whiteboards and chalkboards, large drawing pads, and I have even seen an applicant draw on a window with dry-erase markers.

If we think about good teaching techniques, something the Fundamentals of Instruction subject area focuses on, we know that teaching using multiple methods of presentation increases student learning and retention. The ability to understand and demonstrate this is something a DPE must test on a CFI practical test. Make it easier for your DPE by demonstrating this and discussing it.

JUST KNOWING HOW TO BE A "RIGHT SEAT PILOT" ISN'T WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GOOD, OR EVEN BETTER, A GREAT CFI. IT TAKES BEING A TEACHER. AND THOSE QUALITIES ARE EXEMPLIFIED IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN JUST BEING A GOOD COMMERCIAL PILOT.



PLANNED LESSON TIME—BREAKS

About an hour into the ground session of one CFI test the applicant looked at me and said, "Hey, let's take a break. If you were a student, you would be getting pretty knowledge saturated by now and a break would help you refresh your learning ability a bit."

Huh, she wasn't wrong.

She went on, "Plus, I would like a couple of minutes to get some material ready for the next thing you asked me to teach."

OK, I get it. We all might want a break for a bathroom, to get a fresh cup of coffee, or just to stretch. But this applicant was correlating the need for a break to the learning process. She must have actually learned something from that darn FAA *Aviation Instructor's Handbook*!

Breaks are a good thing. The ground portion is going to be long for both you and the DPE!

Use those breaks, talk about how they help a student and how they help you as an instructor and set yourself up for presenting more material on the test. Even a break can be a teaching moment.

His answer was just another example of why he was a good CFI applicant.

"Oh, don't feel bad, I know we didn't use everything I have, but I didn't really prepare and collect this stuff for the test. I did it for when I am teaching with students after the test," he responded.

Wow. He got it. The CFI practical test and the work he put into it ahead of time wasn't just about being able to pass the test, it was about making him prepared to actually teach and having the resources he would need to do so.

OK, so a few other tips that are quick, but important.

CERTIFICATE AND RATINGS REQUIREMENTS

Download, have, or build checklists for certificates and/or ratings for which you will be able to provide training. It takes the confusion out of the questions relating to experience

CFI APPLICANT SENT ME HOMEWORK!

It is common for a DPE to assign a couple of systems and maneuvers to a CFI applicant ahead of time that they should be prepared to teach. This is a way of demonstrating the ability to develop a lesson plan, present material to a student, and have prepared ahead of time as a good teacher would instead of just "winging it on the fly."

A good CFI applicant will actually collect material, prepare a lesson plan, and set up to teach the student (played by the DPE on the day of the test) the assigned material. This doesn't mean that there won't be other material asked or covered, but this is a great opportunity for a would-be CFI to show how they will "do it in the real world" with a student they schedule for a lesson ahead of time.

In the most surprising of occasions, and this has only happened once to me, I actually got an email from the applicant two days ahead of the scheduled practical test giving me homework to study, something he noted he would expect his student to do if they had an upcoming lesson!

requirements for students. Reading this straight out of the FAR is dry, boring, and commonly leads to confusion that many times leads to disapproval. Get ahead of this and have a resource available.

APPLY AND CORRELATE

Teaching isn't just about information dump to the student. Teach and be able to work with scenarios for your students. Your DPE is going to ask you questions that are scenario based; have answers that demonstrate your ability to take a student to higher levels of learning. You probably memorized the RUAC (Rote, Understanding, Application, and Correlation) mnemonic to tell us what the levels are—demonstrate you can actually put that into action.

HAVE A PLAN FOR A FLIGHT REVIEW

One of the common things a CFI will do is provide flight reviews. Too many applicants show up and tell the DPE that they can do it but have no idea what they would do other than "an

He included some parts from the FAA's *Airplane Flying Handbook* describing the assigned maneuvers, sent me the ACS sections for the maneuvers, and even a couple online videos he had found that described the selected systems, and then even shared with me the lesson plan he had created so the "student would know what to expect" at the time of the lesson.

I happened to be in a meeting with a bunch of aviation industry and FAA representatives. At a break I shared what had just arrived in my email. I wasn't the only one impressed!

PREPARE TO TEACH, NOT JUST TO PASS THE TEST

On a test not long ago, I had a well-prepared applicant who had created a great deal of material, had collected even more material, and was really ready to teach from the materials he had brought to the test. I remarked at the end of the test, "I almost feel bad that we only sampled content in accordance with the PTS requirements, you had so much more prepared today that I feel like the test doesn't do justice to all the work you put in ahead of time and how much of your materials you didn't need today!"

hour of flight and hour of ground" as the FAR requires. Develop a plan for what you would cover, how you would tailor the session to a particular pilot, and be able to describe what you would do if you got asked to do a flight review in an aircraft other than the one you brought to the CFI practical test. Oh, and hey, I seem to remember there being an FAA Advisory Circular about Flight Reviews. Pro-tip—check it out.

DEVELOP A PRE-SOLO KNOWLEDGE TEST—CUSTOMIZE IT

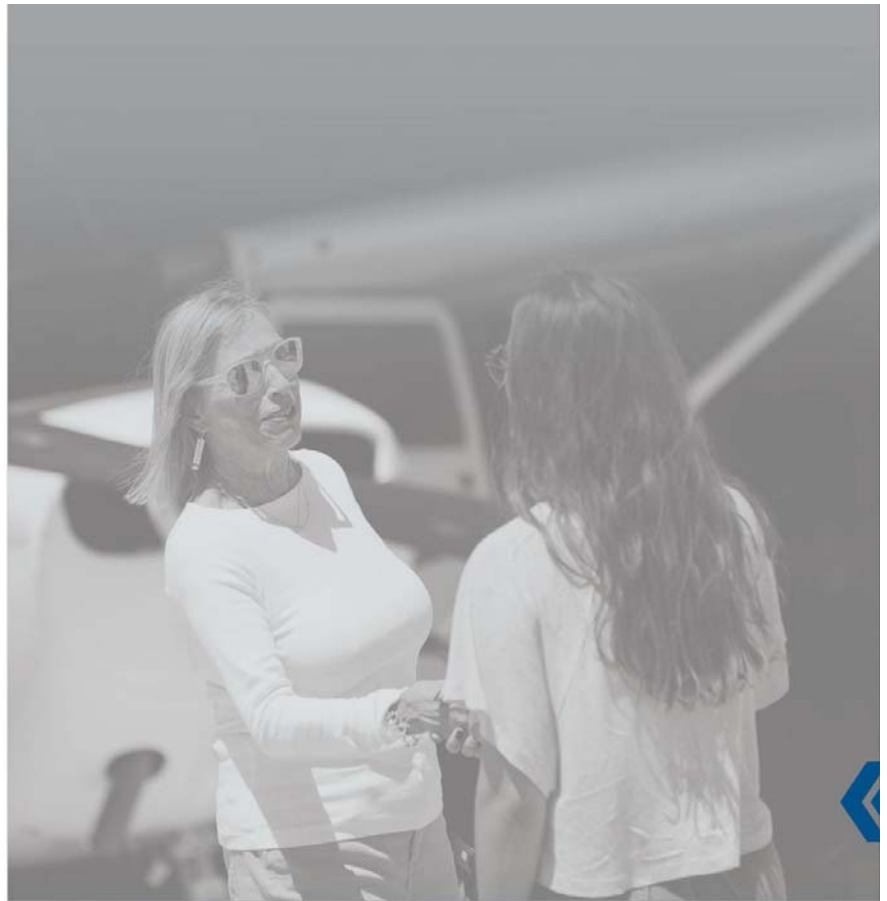
The percentage of applicants who show up to a CFI practical test and tell the DPE that they would have to "give a student a pre-solo knowledge test prior to solo" but don't actually have one prepared is high. It's even a little funny to me how many times when an applicant shows up with one, that it is just the one their flight school always uses or one they downloaded from somewhere on the internet and they haven't bothered to look at the content. Commonly I will see pre-solo knowledge tests that include questions about a different aircraft than the one we will be using for the practical test or about an airport environment across the country somewhere (typically wherever the flight school they downloaded the test from is

ONE OF THE COMMON THINGS A CFI WILL DO IS PROVIDE FLIGHT REVIEWS. TOO MANY APPLICANTS SHOW UP AND TELL THE DPE THAT THEY CAN DO IT BUT HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY WOULD DO OTHER THAN "AN HOUR OF FLIGHT AND HOUR OF GROUND" AS THE FAR REQUIRES.

located, but not their own airport). At least go through the effort to have a pre-solo knowledge test, read it, and modify it to fit the aircraft you will be using and the airspace in which your students might be flying.

Being a CFI really is about teaching. If you are training to be a CFI or training pilots to become CFIs as a CFI yourself, keep this in mind. Challenge the skill to that level. It isn't about being a right seat pilot who can describe what you are doing, it's about being able to convey those skills to the person in the left seat and make them a knowledgeable and proficient pilot. That is a very different thing. Approaching a CFI checkride with that in mind, in everything you do, will almost guarantee it will go better.

***Jason Blair** is an active single and multiengine instructor and FAA designated pilot examiner with 4,900 hours total time and 2,850 hours instruction given. As examiner, he has issued more than 800 pilot certificates. He writes for multiple aviation publications and actively works within the general aviation industry.*



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