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CFItoCFI

ASI'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE SERIOUS FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR

CHECKRIDE DAY

5 THINGS CFIS SHOULD MAKE SURE STUDENTS HAVE WITH THEM

BY JASON BLAIR

"MOTHER HEN" THEM A BIT THE DAY BEFORE OR EVEN ON THE DAY OF THE TEST. GO THROUGH THEIR MATERIALS, DO THE LAST CHECK OF WHAT THEY HAVE WITH THEM, AND MAKE SURE THEY HAVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED.

AN FAA PRACTICAL TEST IS SOMETHING FOR WHICH AN APPLICANT, A STUDENT, IS CERTAINLY NERVOUS. BEING NERVOUS MAKES US FORGET THINGS—AND THIS IS NO DIFFERENT ON TEST DAY.

CFIs can help make things a little bit easier for their students by making sure that they have all the requisite materials with them on checkride day.

This means taking a little charge as the CFI and making sure that you "mother hen" them a bit the day before or even on the day of the test. Go through their materials, do the last check of what they have with them, and make sure they have everything they need.

Most of these should seem obvious, but as a designated pilot examiner (DPE) I can honestly say that they are frequently forgotten on the day of the test. So, here are what I notice are probably the top five things applicants don't have with them on test day.

1. FAR/AIM— A CURRENT COPY

Regulations do change. Seriously. Every year. So, how can an applicant have the most current information and reference if they show up at their practical test with a 3-year-old copy of the Federal Aviation Regulations/Aeronautical Information Manual (FAR/AIM)?

It happens all the time.

Okay, a little leeway is natural if the new copy of the FAR/AIM just shipped last week, but when we get beyond a month or so from the publication date, make sure your applicants have current copies. If nothing else, it looks bad if they have old reference materials. (You wouldn't fly on 3-year-old charts, would you?)

This can be critically important—especially for CFI applicants who will need to reference materials, and who will run into landmines when regulations have changed and they aren't using current information on their practical test.

2. POH/AFM—A USEABLE COPY

I certainly hope any applicant will have a current pilot's operating handbook/airplane flight manual (POH/AFM) in the aircraft he or she will be using for the practical test, since that is required, but it is also a really good idea to have a copy in physical or digital format available to use during the ground portion of the test.

Having a copy of the POH/AFM will allow an applicant to refer to aircraft's systems information, performance charts, and weight and balance information during the ground questioning portion of the test. Lack of having a POH/AFM copy present makes these questions much harder to answer, and it will likely force the applicant to use the official one from the aircraft. This means not only more wear and tear of the POH/AFM from the aircraft (something that can certainly take its toll in an aircraft used in a busy flight training environment), but it also increases the potential that it will not be put back in the aircraft for the scheduled or future flights. In a heavily used aircraft with a busy schedule, it may even result in that aircraft being flown by other users without the official POH/AFM on board while the ground portion of the test is conducted.

HAVING A COPY OF THE POH/AFM WILL ALLOW AN APPLICANT TO REFER TO AIRCRAFT'S SYSTEMS INFORMATION, PERFORMANCE CHARTS, AND WEIGHT AND BALANCE INFORMATION DURING THE GROUND QUESTIONING PORTION OF THE TEST.

APPLICANTS SHOULD BRING A GOVERNMENT-ISSUED PHOTO ID THAT MEETS THE FAA REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION.

Oh, and having the copy available lets the applicant draw and mark in it—in a way that they likely wouldn't want to do in an official aircraft copy—which helps them answer questions more fully!

3. PILOT LOGBOOK/GROUND TRAINING LOG

This seems pretty obvious, but applicants regularly show up without any log of their ground training, and periodically some show up without their pilot logbook on test day. The answer we sometime get as DPEs? "Well, my flight times are there in IACRA."

Um, sure. But that doesn't solve the problem in most cases. For most practical tests, we will need to be able to see that specific ground training areas have been covered and that specific flight training and experience requirements have been met. This can only be done by seeing the documentation that goes with the efforts.

So, bring those logbooks and/or training records on the day of the test.

4. AN UNEXPIRED PHOTO ID

We need to have an ID to match up with your application information, and it has to be current.

Too many times applicants bring expired IDs and unfortunately, the system won't allow us to enter that and have the application go forward.

Applicants should bring a government-issued photo ID that meets the FAA requirements for acceptable identification. Most commonly, these are state-issued driver's licenses and/or photo IDs, passports, and military IDs. Unfortunately, if the applicant is not from the United States, we are not able to use his or her foreign country's driver's license.

No matter what form is used, it must be current. An expired ID will not be able to be used as a form of identification.

5. INSTRUMENT HOOD/FOGGLES/VISOR

"But my instructor usually has me use theirs" is the answer I get many times when I ask applicants if they have a hood/foggles/visor for simulating IFR conditions on practical tests that require that demonstration. The second most common answer is, "There is usually one in the backseat of the plane somewhere…"

Many DPEs, me included, have just gotten in the habit of having something with them for when, not if, applicants find themselves without something to use to simulate instrument flight time. But not all of us have them all of the time and it may not be the type of hood that the student is accustomed to using. This can lead to additional challenge and distraction.

So, make sure your students have a hood they are familiar with and comfortable using to ensure they can do the test.

These are certainly not all of the things an applicant might want or need to take with them to a practical test, but they do happen to be ones that are commonly forgotten. Showing up without them can lead to an inability to document all required information, use resources to find or prove answers, or even complete the test as scheduled. Take the time as a CFI to make sure these and other required items get into the bag of things an applicant will take with them on checkride day.

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