

# **CFI Initial Practical Test Preparation Guide**

The Certified Flight Instructor Initial Practical Test will involve the Applicant “demonstrating instructional knowledge on all subject areas” required for teaching Private, Commercial, Sport, and Recreational Pilot to an Evaluator.

The Flight Instructor Practical Test Standards is the bible when it comes to CFI training and testing. Reading and understanding it should be the first thing anyone striving to attain the CFI should accomplish. It should be in the student's hands whenever receiving training or practicing teaching. This is the one document that the CFI Student, Recommending Instructor, and the FAA Evaluator must follow when conducting this Practical Test. Another function of the PTS is to define the regulatory nature of the Flight Instructor Practical Test. The only "standards" of acceptable performance are those listed in the PTS. The success or failure of any given task must be evaluated solely by the standards of each Task.

The CFI Applicant must convince the examiner that they are able to apply and teach the subject matter in a way that effectively teaches these concepts to a student, taking into consideration the learning principles found in the Fundamentals of Instruction. Especially important is the principle of correlation, a level of learning that relates new concepts to those already known to the student. Finding ways of using examples to teach concepts based upon knowledge previously learned in life or specifically in aviation will help you demonstrate your ability to include the highest learning level of correlation into your teaching. Using Scenario Based Training procedures during the oral will be expected.

Even the best flight instructors do not have all the knowledge in the world when it comes to aviation. They rely on a solid basis of personal information, which they supplement with lots of reference materials that have been collected from the FAA and other reliable sources. This should be true of someone preparing to become a CFI to help them with building their own knowledge base. They must develop a reference library to use while training how and what to teach and while taking the CFI Initial Practical Test. That's why the CFI PTS says: The term 'instructional knowledge' means the instructor Applicant can use the appropriate reference to provide the 'application or correlative level of knowledge' using scenario-based training with each subject matter topic, procedure, or maneuver.

There are two types of reference materials. The first is the list of references used as the basis for the CFI Practical test found in the Introduction of the CFI PTS. The second type of reference material used is a Lesson Plan and Reference Library developed by the CFI Applicant. When preparing a reference library, it should be assembled using the reference list in the PTS and from personally developed/collected reference documents from reliable sources.

The Applicant must learn and demonstrate "instructional knowledge" of the information in the listed references within the FIA PTS. The Applicant's recommending instructor must teach from those references, and the FAA Evaluator has to test from those references. Only the student or the Applicant's instructor has the right to expand that list. If the Applicant doesn't venture outside the list of FAA references, the Evaluator can't either. The reference material listed in the PTS is what anyone seeking their CFI should study, understand, and know how to teach. Be careful with using material from outside references. It may not be accurate. It may be too complicated. It may lead to more questions than it answers, and an Applicant may find that some Evaluators knows the information better than anyone else and turns the Applicant inside out and backwards with questions. The best example of the book concerning Aerodynamics for Naval Aviators. It is an excellent book, but it isn't on the FIA PTS list. If a student elects to use it and refers to it, then the FAA Evaluator can ask questions about it. If the student isn't sure or gets lost or confused, the chances of passing can be in jeopardy. There is no expectation of being at the level of an aeronautical engineer or rocket scientist for this test.

## Lesson Plan Preparation

It is also recommended that the CFI candidate have lesson plans prepared with key speaking points to reference while teaching the required lesson during the oral. A four-part format is recommended for teaching both flight and ground lessons as follows:

1. Why – why must we learn this? Use a scenario to make this point or if a scenario is not applicable, state the reason why this lesson or skill is useful. This uses the retention principle of association in the Fundamentals of Instruction. For example, a meaningful scenario when teaching a lesson on Rectangular Course would be to relate it to flying a traffic pattern when landing.
2. What – what is the maneuver or principle of the lesson? Describe it in detail as well as how it would be performed. For example, when teaching the lesson on Chandelles, it would be described as a climbing 180° turn that is comprised of two sections – the first 90° performed at a constant 30° bank and increasing pitch with the second 90° performed at a constant pitch and decreasing bank.
3. Common Errors – what are the most common errors as described in the relevant FAA Handbook. If you do not perform the maneuver perfectly when demonstrating it, you can use your own errors as examples.
4. ACS/PTS Standards – how will this task be evaluated? For example: in teaching a lesson on Steep Turns, Private PTS standards would be described as a 45° bank +/-10°, altitude maintained +/- 100', and airspeed maintained +/- 10 kts, and rollout on initial heading +/- 10°.

By formatting your lesson plans and teaching the lesson in this way you will achieve a consistent approach and one that will lend itself to teaching whether on the ground or inflight.

Be sure to have a complete set of Lesson Plans that will cover all areas within the Flight Instructor PTS + “Special Emphasis Items” (pg. 8). Your plans should also cover all the items within the ACS for Private, Commercial, Sport, and Recreational.

I suggest making a specific Lesson Plan to cover all material regarding Aerodynamics in the PHAK and Flying Handbook.

It is helpful but not essential to have a syllabus which organizes the sequence of lesson plans for teaching Private, Commercial, Sport, and Recreational. You can develop these yourself or use established syllabi available from a variety of providers such as Cessna, Jeppesen, ASA, etc.

## Lesson Plan Usage

A CFI Applicant is expected to use Lesson Plans as reference while teaching subject matter, but not to the extent that they are dependent on it to demonstrate instructional knowledge. The Evaluator must use judgment. For example: An Applicant is asked to teach the National Airspace System. While teaching this subject matter they might show a diagram illustration from an FAA published document, that would be acceptable. But they are not expected to only be able to read directly from the source or lesson plan or copy the material straight to the board and be considered teaching the subject. This would not be acceptable.

## Fundamentals of Instructing (FOI)

The best way to really learn Fundamentals of Instruction is to teach by using examples of each term or concept and applying scenarios to each. Following the outline of the Aviation Instructor Handbook when completing your lesson plans will work well when demonstrating your knowledge.

## FAA Resources to be Downloaded and Referenced

The resources contained in the following list (also listed in the PTS) should be read and available for reference during the oral as well as all relevant FAA handbooks. It is also useful to have reviewed the FAA Order 8900 and 49 CFR 1553 for current TSA requirements for training U.S. and foreign students.

14 CFR Part 1	Definitions & Abbreviations
14 CFR Part 23	Airworthiness Standards
14 CFR Part 39	Airworthiness Directives
14 CFR Part 43	Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance
14 CFR Part 61	Certification of Pilots & Flight Instructors
14 CFR Part 67	Medical Standards & Certification
14 CFR Part 91	General Operating & Flight Rules
NTSB Part 830	Notification & Reporting of Aircraft Accidents & Incidents
AC 00-6	Aviation Weather
AC 00-45	Aviation Weather Services
AC 60-22	Aeronautical Decision Making
AC 60-28	English Language Skills
AC 61-65	Certification of Pilots and Flight Instructors
AC 61-67	Stall and Spin Awareness Training
AC 61-84	Role of Pre-Flight Preparation
AC 61-107	Operations of Aircraft at Altitude Above 25,000 Feet MSL and/or Mach Greater Than .75
AC 90-42	Traffic Advisory Practices at Uncontrolled Airports
AC 90-48	Pilot's Role in Collision Avoidance
AC 90-66	Recommended Traffic Patterns at Uncontrolled Airports
AC 91-13	Cold Weather Operation of Aircraft
AC 91-55	Reduction of Electrical Failures Following Aircraft Starting
AC 91.73	Parts 91 & 135 Single Pilot Procedures During Taxi Operations
AC 150/5340-1	Standards for Airport Markings
AC150/5340-18	Standards for Airport Sign Systems
AC 150/5340-30	Design and Installation Details for Airport Visual Aids

Aircraft Weight & Balance Handbook  
Risk Management Handbook  
Airplane Flying Handbook  
Aviation Instructor's Handbook  
Commercial Pilot ACS  
Private Pilot ACS  
Instrument Flying Handbook  
Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge  
Flight Instructor Practical Test Standards  
Conduct of Airmen Knowledge Tests

## Accounts Expected To Be Used

FAA Safety - [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov) - set your preferences and be able to teach how to Wings Program.  
FSS - <http://www.1800wxbrief.com> - be able to teach how to acquire briefings and file flight plans.  
Aviation Weather - [www.aviationweather.gov](http://www.aviationweather.gov) especially the GFI Tool, and how to use the standard briefing section.  
Foreflight or Garmin Pilot – be able to teach how to use at least one of these applications.

## **The "Oral" Portion**

On the day of the test shortly after Evaluator and Applicant introductions have finished, then the Applicant can expect to be asked to determine their eligibility for this test. This translates to presenting identification, pilot certificates, medical, graduation certificates, written knowledge test results, logbook and endorsements required to prove his eligibility. In addition, they will be expected to present all the aircraft documents and other miscellaneous equipment required by the PTS.

Once IACRA is signed by the Applicant and "The Test Has Begun" is announced. The Evaluator starts with questions and scenarios. Most will start with AOA I, FOI. Then work their way through the PTS one AOA at a time. It is important that the Applicant follows along with his own copy of the PTS. At some point the Applicant will be asked to teach the Evaluator a flight maneuver that will also be demonstrated inflight. Generally, when that lesson is complete, assuming all has gone well, the Applicant and the Evaluator will be headed out to preflight the airplane.

The practical test for the CFI should not be a series of questions asked by the Evaluator and answered by the Applicant like the other Practical Tests. But rather the test will be about the Applicant demonstrating instructional knowledge of the Elements of each Task. The CFI practical test isn't about memorizing all the information. It's about knowing the material to be taught and understanding the concepts behind that material. If an Applicant knows a specific acronym but does not understand how to teach the use of the acronym involving a realistic scenario then he does not understand the subject matter.

According to the language in the Flight Instructor PTS, the test is conducted like this example: Scenario presented by the Evaluator such as "I am a student pilot with 14 hours. I have soloed at an uncontrolled airport and am about to take my first dual cross-country. I will be flying between these two airports. Teach me about the National Airspace System involved in this scenario." The CFI Applicant then puts his thoughts together, digs out a teaching aid and teaches the information required by the Task. As the lesson progresses, the Evaluator would then ask questions, but only the kind that a student, at the prescribed level, would ask if the information presented didn't make sense or wasn't clear. The Evaluator would also reserve the right to ask additional subject matter questions, if he didn't think the material presented was accurate or that the Applicant didn't have a command of the subject matter. It is best to teach the material in a thorough manner using your lesson plans to avoid "prompting" from the Evaluator to have to probe for the knowledge. It must be assumed that a real student will not have the knowledge to be able to ask all of the right questions to ensure a thoroughly taught lesson. If the Task is taught in an incomplete manner that would leave the lesson in jeopardy of leaving a serious lack of information, then it will be considered unsatisfactory.

Each Practical Test is unique and does not always go in the same flow. The goal is for the Evaluator to help guide a flow that will allow the Applicant to teach the material in a logical and realistic manner. I will intervene and guide you to the next subject to ensure test efficiency. Please do not be offended, because I have determined that PTS Standards have been met for the specific Area of Operation and am simply moving to the next item of business.

## **The "Flight" Portion**

The flight will cover all required Private and Commercial items in the AOA listed in the FIA PTS, Oral selected flight maneuver, and several other Tasks will be selected by the Evaluator on the day of the test.

The CFI Applicant is expected to demonstrate all the maneuvers and communicate with ATC for the entire flight. The Evaluator may take the controls to perform one or more maneuvers, but the Applicant must be prepared to fly every maneuver within the appropriate ACS Standards from the right seat.

During the flight be sure to continue to teach throughout the entire duration of the flight. Avoid being quiet for extended periods, especially while performing a maneuver or landing. An Applicant must be able to verbally teach while demonstrating each maneuver simultaneously.

# Required Item Checklist to Bring

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- Lesson Plan Binder – See Lesson Plan**
- Preplanned Cross Country** for Dead Reckoning Navigation Lesson
- Current Aeronautical Charts** – Digital and/or Paper
- Flight Computer and Plotter** - E6B or Electronic Flight Computer
- Flight Plan and Flight Log Forms** – Digital and/or Paper
- Current EFB**
- ACS/PTS** - for Flight Instructor, Private, Commercial, Sport, and Recreational
- Aircraft POH** – Digital and/or Paper
- Current FAR/AIM, Chart Supplement, and Other Appropriate Publications**
- Current PHAK, AFH, etc.**
- AC 61-65H and Others**
- Written Personal Minimums** - FAA Document
- Visual Teaching Aids** – such as power point presentations, diagrams, miniature airplane, miniature prop, miniature gyro, etc.
- Projector or TV Display** – optional but encouraged.
- Color Marker Set**
- View-limiting Device**

## PERSONAL RECORDS

- Identification—Gov Issued Photo/Signature ID displaying current address matching your 8710-1 address**
- FAA Pilot Certificate**
- Current and Appropriate Medical Certificate**
- IACRA Application # and a Printed FAA 8710-1 copy** – just in case there is an IACRA Website issue
- Airman Knowledge Test Report – FIA and FOI** (if applicable)
- All Pilot Logbooks with Appropriate Instructor Endorsements** – See (Endorsements Required Section Below)  
*Logbooks – Be sure to total all pages using ink only. Pencil will not be accepted. The FAA considers your logbook as a legal record.*
- Approved 141 School Graduation Certificate** (if applicable)
- Decoded list of the Written Knowledge Test PLT/ACS Codes** (for all questions missed.)
- Course Graduation Certificates attained from your FAASafety.gov account.**
- FAA Form 8060-5, Notice of Disapproval** (only if Retesting)

## AIRCRAFT DOCUMENTS – TESTING AIRCRAFT ONLY

- All Airframe, Engine, Propeller, Avionics Maintenance Logs, including AD Compliance List and STCs.**
- Bring a list of each inspection, including the last completion: date/time and next due: date/time.**
- Pilot's Operating Handbook and FAA-Approved Flight Manual**
- Please bring photos of the Airworthiness Certificate, Registration, Type Data Plate, Weight/Balance and GPS Database Currency Page.**

## Endorsements Required

### **A.1 Prerequisites for Practical Test: Title 14 of the CFR (14 CFR) part 61, § 61.39(a)(6)(i) and (ii).**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has received and logged training time within 2 calendar-months preceding the month of application in preparation for the practical test and *[he or she]* is prepared for the required practical test for the issuance of *[applicable]* certificate.

### **A.2 Review of Deficiencies Identified on Airman Knowledge Test: § 61.39(a)(6)(iii), as required.**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject areas in which *[he or she]* was deficient on the *[applicable]* airman knowledge test.

### **A.41 Fundamentals of Instructing Knowledge Test: § 61.183(d).**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has received the required fundamentals of instruction training of § 61.185(a)(1). I have determined that *[he or she]* is prepared for the Fundamentals of Instructing knowledge test.

### **A.42 Flight Instructor Aeronautical Knowledge Test: § 61.183(f).**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has received the required training of § 61.185(a)(2) or (3) *(as appropriate to the flight instructor rating sought)*. I have determined that *[he or she]* is prepared for the *[name of]* knowledge test.

### **A.43 Flight Instructor Ground and Flight Proficiency/Practical Test: § 61.183(g).**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has received the required training of §61.187(b). I have determined that *[he or she]* is prepared for the CFI – *[aircraft category and class]* practical test.

### **A.45 Spin Training: § 61.183(i)(1). The spin training endorsement is only required of flight instructor airplane and flight instructor glider applicants.**

I certify that *[First name, MI, Last name]* has received the required training of §61.183(i) in *[an airplane, a glider]*. I have determined that *[he or she]* is competent and possesses instructional proficiency in stall awareness, spin entry, spins, and spin recovery procedures.

**Note:** A.41 and A.42 are required for the Practical Test and must be in the Applicant's Logbook to satisfy the ground training requirements. Although, the FIA/FOI Knowledge Test Written Endorsement are NOT Required for Testing Center.

## Conclusion

Enjoy all your time spent in preparation for the CFI Practical Test and always remember that the more preparation you put forth will not only ensure an easier test for you, but it will propel you to enter the new role as a CFI with added confidence when teaching your first students.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns before the day of testing.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel L. Kelley".

Daniel L. Kelley  
[www.iowaDPE.com](http://www.iowaDPE.com)