

Common Reasons for a Cancellation or Disapproval of a Practical Test (Checkride)

- 1) Not knowing the Airman Certification Standard (ACS) for the Certificate Sought.
 - a. The ACS details everything which might be on your Practical Test. Not everything listed will be on your test, but each item is “fair game”.
 - b. The ACS details HOW each maneuver should be flown and how it will be evaluated. The FAA’s Airplane Flying Handbook goes into more details.
 - c. The ACS explains how the DPE must administer the Practical Test, the required standards and the limitations and latitude which the DPE has. The DPE cannot “make stuff up”. If it is not listed in the ACS, it cannot be tested.
 - d. If it is listed as a “Skill” it is required to be demonstrated.
- 2) Not meeting the required Aeronautical Experience for the Certificate.
 - a. Do you have all of the flight training time properly documented?
 - b. Do you show all night and towered field Takeoff and Landings to a “Full Stop”?
 - c. Do your Cross-Country Flights comply with 61.1? Not just FAR 1.1.
 - d. Do you have all of the required Endorsements? Including a current 90 Solo Endorsement?
- 3) Aircraft documents incomplete or incorrect (AROW).
 - a. Do you have all of the required aircraft documents?
 - b. Is the Registration current?
 - c. Do you have the aircraft’s POH? Not just an “Information Manual”?
 - d. Do you have the aircraft’s actual Maintenance Logbooks?
 - e. Are the required inspections documented and current?
 - f. Is the GPS Nav Database up-to-date (Instrument PT)?
 - g. Is the VOR check up-to-date (Instrument PT)? [Yes, we still use VORs]
 - h. Are all required placards in place? (Check your Limitations Section)
 - i. Inoperative Equipment not properly documented and secured. (91.213)
- 4) Aircraft not appropriately equipped for the Certificate Sought.
 - a. See the ACS Appendix 7 and Part 61.45.
 - b. The aircraft must be capable to be flown through each required Task. (i.e. – For the Private Pilot, if the aircraft has no gyro instruments it may not be used as you would not be able to complete VIII Basic Instrument Maneuvers.)
- 5) Failure to use the appropriate checklist. (ACS Appendix 6: Safety of Flight)
 - a. A Skill requirement throughout the Practical Test (including the preflight).
 - b. Proper checklist at the appropriate time.
 - c. Use the appropriate “Emergency Checklist” when appropriate.
 - d. Run the “Before Landing Checklist” before final, but run it.
- 6) Failure to brief the passenger (examiner).
 - a. In section II-Preflight Procedures / B-Flight Deck Management / Skill-S2
- 7) Not checking for traffic prior to entering/crossing a runway.
 - a. Runway Incursion is a serious problem. Stop and check! This is part of Collision-Avoidance. (ACS Appendix 6 Safety of Flight – General)
 - b. A technique - Treat the Red Runway ID Sign as a Stop Sign.
- 8) Poor or No Management of Automation/Navigation System.

- a. “Direct To, Direct To” does not demonstrate Nav management nor systems knowledge, program the scenario’s Flight Plan.
 - b. If it is installed in the aircraft, be conversant with the system’s operation. You don’t have to be the expert on the system, but you should be comfortable with the main functions of the system.
 - c. Installed autopilots will be used to demonstrate system knowledge, and demonstration of when it’s appropriate to use the autopilot.
- 9) Failure to Clear the Area before any maneuver.
- a. In the Slow Flight & Stalls, Performance & Ground Reference Maneuvers and the Emergency Descent, the very first Skill is “Clear the Area”. This typically means Clearing Turns. It goes back to “Collision Avoidance” (ACS Appendix 6 Safety of Flight – General) Bank the airplane and LOOK. Look UP, look DOWN, look AROUND. Does the turn need to be 90° or 180°? No, but you MUST clear the airspace around you before every maneuver.
 - b. “Clearing the Area” is just that. Making sure that you are clearing the airspace around you. It is NOT an evaluated maneuver with a bank or altitude standard. It is an evaluation of your Collision-Avoidance skills. You should be eyeballs out, looking for traffic, not eyeballs in looking at the instruments. Clear the Area.
- 10) Failure to make correct Stall Recovery.
- a. Know, practice and demonstrate stall awareness (Announce “There’s the horn. There’s the buffet.)
 - b. Remember, raise the low wing with the RUDDER, not the ailerons. A spin entry is a guaranteed Disapproval!
 - c. Make the appropriate stall recovery and recover to a climb at Vx/Vy.
- 11) Not being able to “make” your emergency landing area.
- a. Pick the biggest, closest field.
 - b. Maintain Best Glide Speed.
 - c. Stay close to your landing field, don’t fly away.
 - d. Use an Overhead Spiral or S-Turns to lose altitude
 - e. Do not overshoot, nor undershoot.
- 12) Continuing into an unacceptable or unsafe situation.
- a. If you wouldn’t do that in “Real Life” don’t do so on the test!
 - b. If you would Go Around in “Real Life”, Go Around!
 - i. Exceptions are the Engine failure (Pvt) and the Power Off 180° (Comm).

The Practical Test is a regular flight, with a few “wrinkles” added to observe your Aeronautical Decision Making skills. You are to handle the test just as you would on a flight with your family or friends. The test is an Open Book test. You may research any answer which you feel you need. You don’t get to look up every answer. And, here’s a secret, we want you to PASS. You have to earn the Certificate, but we want you to succeed.

The main advice which I can give is... Relax. Your instructor has determined that you are ready for the test. Trust their judgement. Do not “cram” for the test the night before. If you don’t

know it the night before, staying up all night will not help. Get a good night's sleep and a nice, light breakfast before you begin.

A bit about the (dreaded) DPE. No, DPEs do not have fangs, stay up nights figuring out diabolical checkride scenarios nor enjoy handing out Disapproval Notices. They are just fellow pilots who enjoy teaching and want to make sure that the next generation of pilots (you) get off to a good start. To become a FAA Designated Pilot Examiner, one must be a very experienced pilot AND very experienced Flight Instructor. All DPE's must hold current Instructor Certificates and must be active flight instructors. Many are current professional pilots who are required to take checkrides themselves a few times every year. DPEs attend initial training at OKC, annual meetings with the FAA, attend biennial recurrent training, and are also subject to being observed by an FAA Safety Inspector at any time. We get to take multiple checkrides ourselves. So, we understand nerves and Checkitis! DPEs are not FAA Inspectors nor government employees, just private citizens authorized to administer the tests. There are currently just under 1000 DPEs nationwide, whom perform around 98% of all civilian Practical Tests.