COMMON ERRORS ON YOUR INSTRUMENT CHECK RIDE

There's a myriad of ways to 'bust' an instrument check ride. Without a doubt, it's one of the more challenging rides along your pathway!

Here are a few, in no particular order, that I see on a pretty regular basis during the flying portion of the ride. SOME of these will result in a simple debrief item at the conclusion of a successful ride but any of them can be the cause for a Letter Of Disapproval.

MIS-DIALING FREQUENCIES: This is pretty obvious and it's easy to avoid. Take your time and double-check yourself.

MISSING ATC/TOWER RADIO CALLS: This one's also pretty obvious. Listen up!

LOSING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS: We have all become children of the magenta line. But, what happens if/when that line disappears. And, it WILL disappear at some point, for some period of time, during the check ride. Yes, modern avionics are incredibly robust and reliable but when they fail, it's almost always during a check ride. Coincidence? You decide.

NOT ID-ING VORs and LOCs: Again, this one is pretty obvious. If you are using ground-based navigation systems, make sure to ID them. Some panel-mounted navigators will display the ID information on the screen. But, if you don't have one of those, be sure to verify the morse code identifier.

UNDERSTANDING FLY-OVER VS FLY-BY FIXES: There's a difference and there's a good reason for that difference. Know it.

BUTTONOLOGY IN GENERAL: Know your navigator and how it works! Sounds simple, right, but I see it time and time again. The applicant will push a button and the box doesn't respond as expected. Panic ensues. Also, applicants forget to toggle between VLOC and GPS at the most inopportune times.

LOW APPROACH: This doesn't mean to descend below minimum and buzz the runway. We're not performing at an airshow! It means go missed at the appropriate point/altitude and execute the missed approach (as published or as assigned by ATC).

CIRCLING APPROACHES: How far away from the runway can you be? If you 'lose sight' of the runway because you've gotten too far away, you must go missed. Know your altitude AND visibility minimums. On occasion, at a local airport I use for circling approaches, there is traffic in the pattern that interferes with us. I can't speak for other examiners but things like that, things that are *out of the control of the applicant*, are taken into consideration when evaluating the circling approach. Finally, let's say that the circling minimums are 500 feet and I tell you the ceiling is 1000 feet. There's no need to descend to 500 feet and fly the entire pattern at that altitude. It's unnecessarily dangerous. Fly as high as you can while staying out of the 'clouds' until your judgement tells you to start your descent to land.

3/4-SCALE DEFLECTION ON YOUR CDI: This is the kiss of death. If we see that "during the final approach" (this is a quote from the ACS) , it's a bust. 'Nuff said.

HEADING AND ALTITUDE: In most cases, you have +/- 100 feet and +/- 10 degrees. If you exceed those tolerances, fix it….NOW.

PARTIAL PANEL: If you're flying a glass panel airplane, be sure you know how to configure the avionics for partial panel flying. Too often, instructor does it for the applicant during training. During the check ride when I ask, "do you know how to dim the panel", the answer is "my instructor always did that". The fact is that there are so many different types of avionics out there, I may not know, either. We always figure something out but sometimes it's not pretty.