

# Austin's Very Easy Guide to Passing Your Part 135 IFR-PIC Checkride


2012 Revision 1

THINGS CHANGE OFTEN! CHECK MY WEB SITE PERIODICALLY TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE USING THE MOST RECENT VERSION.

Volume 6 in the “Austin's Very Easy Guide” (AVEG) series  
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**For official information specific to your employer, refer to:**

- ☑ Your company's operations manual.
- ☑ Your company's FAA operations specifications.
- ☑ Your company's approved training program.
- ☑ Your aircraft's POH or AFM.
- ☑ The applicable Federal Aviation Regulations.
- ☑ Any relevant FAA Advisory Circulars.
- ☑ Standing case law and interpretations published by the FAA Office of the Chief Counsel and/or rulings issued by NTSB Administrative Law Judges.



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6. Vol. 6 – Austin's Very Easy Guide to Passing Your Part 135 IFR-PIC Checkride

Although much of the information contained in this series is generic and could potentially apply to many areas of aviation, it is designed specifically as a study aid for those pilots engaged in on-demand Part 135 single-pilot IFR cross-country operations in small reciprocating aircraft. **THIS MATERIAL IS NEITHER ENDORSED BY NOR APPROVED FOR ANY SPECIFIC OPERATOR. IT IS GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL AND GUIDANCE INFORMATION ONLY!**

## WHAT TO DO:

✈️ **READ** the three applicable initial and recurrent testing regulations: FAR §135.293 (the VFR Competency Check), FAR §135.297 (the IFR Proficiency Check) and FAR §135.299 (the Line Check). Read them *carefully* and *completely* – they are the law. An operator may do *more* than what is required in those rules, but not less (without a special waiver from the FAA).

✈️ **STUDY** your company’s FAA-approved training program, flight standards manual and/or operations handbook. The procedures they contain are **MANDATORY**. If your manual says you have to wear a red hat, for instance, then you have to wear a red hat. It is neither voluntary nor optional. If your manual says you have to say “booga booga” whenever you turn left, then you have to do that, too. The FAA requires operators to provide highly specific, extremely detailed, completely standardized instructions to its flight crew members. These instructions should be unambiguous and followed consistently at all times (unless a true emergency makes a deviation necessary).

✈️ **PRACTICE** using all standard operating procedures (SOPs) and running the memory flows and paper checklists properly and correctly on **EVERY LEG** of **EVERY FLIGHT**. That way, not only are you always prepared for a checkride, but your flying will be more disciplined overall. Many operators require their flight crew members to vocalize everything. This serves multiple purposes. First, it facilitates communication between crew members in a multiple-pilot flight deck. Second, it helps any pilot (including single-pilot flight crews) stay focused and alert and helps to prevent careless errors. Third, on a checkride, it makes it very clear to the person conducting the check that you are doing things right.

✈️ **KNOW** the applicable FAA Practical Test Standards (PTS).

**WHAT *NOT* TO DO:**

⊘ **DO NOT** show up unprepared (as if you hadn't known for months that your checkride was coming). There are no mysteries and no surprises. **Be professional.**

⊘ **DO NOT** act like having to do an initial or recurrent checkride is an unfair and unreasonable burden that you must suffer through. (We *all* have to do it!) **Be professional.**

⊘ **DO NOT** display an arrogant, immature, cocky attitude. If the person conducting the check gets the strong sense that your attitude is something like, “hey, I’m a great natural-born pilot; I don’t *need* all these stupid rules and procedures to do my job! I fly by instinct, man!” then that person is likely to be negatively inclined towards you. **Be professional.**

⊘ **DO NOT** constantly tell the person giving the check how nervous you are. Likewise, do not keep saying that you “don’t test well.” Trust me, they’ve heard that one a thousand times. The standards are what they are. Don’t make excuses or act like you question your own ability. **Be professional.**

**FOUR TYPES OF PILOTS THAT EXAMINERS OFTEN HAVE TO DEAL WITH**  
*(Please try not to behave like this. Your examiner will appreciate it!)*

**THE EXPLAINER** – This type of pilot feels the need to defend and justify everything he or she did wrong. He or she will attempt to convince the examiner that whatever the mistake was, he or she actually did it on purpose for some complicated and esoteric imaginary reason. The Explainer usually internalizes these rationalizations and seems to believe them. This makes the Explainer exhausting to fly with and difficult to train. **THERE IS NO NEED TO EXPLAIN ERRORS.** If you screw up, simply acknowledge it and then proceed normally.

**THE EXCUSE-MAKER** – This type of pilot didn't get enough sleep last night, didn't have a good breakfast, has been going through some really tough times lately, is under a lot of personal stress, is just recovering from a prolonged illness and so on and so forth. The most common excuse, of course, is "I'm really nervous; I hate checkrides; I never test well." Examiners get tired of excuses because the standards do not change. **IF YOU DO NOT FEEL READY TO FLY TODAY, THEN CANCEL THE FLIGHT.** If you *do* fly, whether it is a checkride or not, you must operate safely, legally and consistently within all applicable standards.

**THE CHALLENGER** – This type of pilot questions the rules and procedures. If you seriously believe that an approved procedure needs to be modified (and hey, maybe it does), then submit a written proposal to your operator's Chief Pilot explaining why you think the change is necessary. If you seriously believe that a regulatory requirement needs to be modified, then it will be between you and the FAA. **In any case, A CHECKRIDE IS NOT THE TIME FOR THIS.** Show the examiner that you are capable of doing it by the book; you can talk about making changes later.

**THE DENIER** – This type of pilot insists that whatever mistake he or she made did not actually happen. Remember that a single minor goof is almost never the cause of a failed checkride; a failed checkride is the result of either a single *major, critical* mistake or a consistent inability to fly within the PTS. **PRETENDING THAT IT DID NOT HAPPEN WILL NOT CAUSE THE EXAMINER TO IGNORE OR FORGIVE IT.** It will only cause the examiner to wonder about your honesty or your level of awareness.

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**BRIEF ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*(See the rest of this booklet for more detailed information.)*

**Q:** What's going to be on the checkride?

**A:** All of the maneuvers and procedures listed on FAA form 8410-3 and/or in Federal Aviation Regulations §135.293, §135.297 and §135.299 and/or in your operator's training manual – *as applicable*. Be sure to read those regs carefully and completely. Your company training program may require more, but never less.

**Q:** Will there be a knowledge test?

**A:** Yes. §135.293 and §135.297 both call for an "oral or written test," each on a different list of subject areas. (Most pilots seem to prefer the written format to the oral format. Plus, from the Check Airman's perspective, it is easier to administer to groups, easier to grade objectively and inherently more uniform and standardized. Also, it provides tangible proof to the FAA that the operator is testing all of its pilots on all of the required subject areas.)

**Q:** What will be covered on that test?

**A:** All of the subject areas listed in paragraph (a) of §135.293 and paragraph (c) of §135.297. (See page 31.)

**Q:** Can I do it as an oral instead of a written?

**A:** Yes, unless there is a group being tested, in which case it is more practical and expedient to do it as a written. In any case, the subject areas will be exactly the same.

**Q:** Will it be open-book or closed-book?

**A:** This will be a closed-book test; no reference materials may be used.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** The regulations say that a test must be given "*on that pilot's knowledge*," which implies that what is being tested is *what that pilot actually knows* as opposed to what that pilot knows how to look up. (During the post-test review and critique, however, reference materials may be used for discussion.)

**Q:** On the checkride, do I have to use all those procedures and checklists we learned in initial training?

**A:** Yes. If it appears in your operator's approved manual, then you must do it that way.

**Q:** How much notice will I have?

**A:** As much as possible and practical, which often isn't a lot. It may be two weeks or it may be one hour. There is no requirement under Part 135 to provide the pilot with any minimum amount of advance notice.

**Q:** Will I have to travel?

**A:** Maybe. Your operator may send a Check Airman to a centrally located airport and then have all pilots due for recurrent testing converge on that location for a weekend of checkrides. Or the company may ask you to travel to a training/testing facility.

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**Q:** Will I get a second chance if I fail?

**A:** That is a matter of company or union policy. There is no legal requirement under Part 135 for retraining and retesting. At the discretion of the Check Airman, the Manager of Training, the Chief Pilot and the Director of Operations, you may receive remedial training and then be allowed to take the checkride again . . . or you may be terminated. In general, if you show a positive, professional attitude and have a good job performance history, then they are probably much more likely to give you a second chance. No one is automatically entitled to one, however – so don't expect it.

**Q:** What's the difference between the recurrent ground training and the oral or written test given as part of the checkride?

**A:** §135.351 requires that recurrent ground training be given to each flight crewmember every 12 calendar months. The oral or written test given as part of the checkride, however, is required by paragraph (a) of §135.293 and paragraph (c) of §135.297. This is a separate, different requirement and is not generally met at the same time.

**Q:** Does it change my base month when I take an initial equipment checkride in a new equipment type?

**A:** Yes. Unless you take it in your *current* base month, the month in which you take your upgrade checkride will be your new base month.

**Q:** I'm dual-qualified in two different equipment types. Which one do I take my checkride in?

**A:** You will alternate between types.

**Q:** How long do I have to take the checkride before I'm overdue?

**A:** You can take your checkride from the first day of your early base month until the last day of your late grace month without changing your base month (a total of three months). If you take your checkride before the first day of your early base month or after the last day of your late grace month it will "reset" your base month. It is worth noting, however, that if you fail a checkride you are immediately illegal to fly under Part 135, even if you failed it on the first day of your early base month.

**Q:** Can I take my recurrent checkride with an FAA inspector at my local FSDO?

**A:** Yes. But be aware that the grace provisions of §135.301(b) do *not* apply to FAA inspectors; if you fail a maneuver you fail the checkride. You will not receive additional instruction during the flight.

**Q:** What happens to the three copies of the 8410-3 form that the Check Airman makes?

**A:** One goes to our Principal Operations Base in Orlando, where the Director of Operations puts it in your personnel file. Another goes to the Orlando Flight Standards District Office. The third is your copy to keep.

**Q:** Do I have to carry my copy of the 8410-3 form with me when I fly?

**A:** No. If an FAA inspector ever asks to see proof that you are legally qualified to work for a Part 135, have him or her contact your operator.

**Q:** Is there any reason for me to keep my copy of the 8410-3 form?

**A:** Your recurrent checkride is good as a §61.56 Flight Review for 24 calendar months and also counts to fulfill your §61.57(c) recent instrument experience requirement for 6 calendar months. If you own or rent an airplane, this may save you some time, money and trouble. (Think of it as a fringe benefit.)

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**Q:** Will the Check Airman give me any kind of logbook endorsement or signoff?

**A:** No. Since you are already appropriately certificated, rated and endorsed to fly the category, class and type of aircraft in which you take your checkride, you can simply log it as regular pilot-in-command time, not dual received.

**Q:** Can the checkrides be combined?

**A:** Yes, and they often are. It is possible to meet the requirements of all three checkride regs (§135.293, §135.297 and §135.299) in a single flight.

**Q:** Is the recurrent checkride going to be easier or harder than the initial checkride?

**A:** The performance standards are exactly, precisely, 100% identical in every way.



## INTRODUCTION

The fact that you are reading this booklet is a very good sign; it means that you have taken an interest in preparing for your checkride! Most people who fail checkrides – whether it’s a Part 61 private pilot checkride or a captain’s Part 121 line check – do so for one of two very basic reasons:

1. They simply didn’t take the time to prepare for it. (I.e., they didn’t study, practice and review.)
2. They didn’t take it seriously and put forth their best effort. (I.e., they were sloppy, undisciplined, disorganized, distracted or just plain lazy during the flight check.)

I originally wrote the earliest version of this booklet in the year 2000 because I received so many requests from the field for a single-source reference explaining what recurrent checkrides are all about, especially from those who had never taken one before and were worried. Hopefully you can find the answers to all your questions here. Once you understand the requirements you may find that there is nothing to be afraid of. A checkride should be respected and taken seriously, not feared. As I work on this latest edition, I have given approximately 1,000 initial and recurrent Part 135 checkrides and have taken about 26 of them myself – some with company Check Airmen, many with FAA inspectors from the FSDO. I’ve had good checkrides, I’ve had embarrassing checkrides. I feel your pain.

Some pilots seem to think that a Check Airman’s job is to try to find a way to “get you” – to trick you or trap you into failing your checkride. This is not true at all.

Remember that a Check Airman is a **company employee**. Although he *is* strictly bound by the FAA’s regulations and standards when giving a checkride, his desire is for you to pass so that business can go on as usual. If you fail, it makes his day *longer*, not shorter. It gives him *more* paperwork, not less. It makes his job *harder*, not easier. The bottom line is this: **a failure costs the company more money than a pass**. We want to avoid failures. Failures are bad for everybody. That’s why I wrote this booklet: to help prevent and avoid failures.

What does the Check Airman want? He wants the checkride to be a quick, easy, painless experience in which the pilot being checked does everything right the first time. Then the Check Airman can finish the paperwork, shake hands, say “thank you, have a nice day” and move right on to the next guy.

OK, so what does the Check Airman *not* want? He does *not* want the checkride to be a difficult, drawn-out, exhausting, annoying ordeal in which multiple maneuvers must be repeated and the pilot being tested argues, whines, explains and makes excuses. That’s a hassle for everyone; it really slows things down.

And what does the Check Airman *really* not want? He really doesn’t want to have to fail a pilot. That causes all sorts of problems for everybody involved. But a Check Airman *will* fail a pilot if the pilot leaves the Check Airman no choice. If a pilot does not (or cannot) demonstrate to a Check Airman that he can meet the FAA’s published minimum standards for acceptable performance, the Check Airman has no alternative but to call the checkride “unsatisfactory.” So don’t let this happen to you. (. . . *Please!*)

Read the advice and suggestions on the following pages for preparing for your next recurrent Part 135 IFR-PIC checkride. Use them and **ace it!**

– *Austin S. Collins*

- 1. The EXAMINER’S responsibility is to make the checkride fair, reasonable and comprehensive, applying the FAA’s published standards as objectively and uniformly as possible to evaluate the pilot’s knowledge and abilities.**
- 2. The PILOT’S responsibility is to be well prepared and take the checkride seriously, leaving no doubt in the examiner’s mind that he or she meets those standards.**

**For the purpose of this booklet, my examples will involve a fictional Part 135 operator called “Austin’s Air Service, LLC” using Cessna 210 Centurions and Beech Barons to haul medical specimens and other lab work along with other light on-demand cargo.**

### THREE IMPORTANT BASIC CHECKRIDE CONCEPTS

The applicable federal requirements for initial and recurrent testing are *strict, explicit* and *specific*. Don't waste your time questioning them. They are non-negotiable. You might not like them or agree with them – in fact, I might not, either! – but that just doesn't matter. My opinion is irrelevant; so's yours. The rules are what they are and we have to abide by them.

#### CONCEPT I: Adherence to the PTS

**Common misconception:** The Check Airman primarily uses his own arbitrary, subjective judgment to evaluate a pilot.

**Reality:** The Check Airman is *severely* limited by the FAA's regulations and standards. Although some degree of subjectivity is inevitably involved in any interaction between human beings, the Check Airman is bound by the rules and guidelines published by the federal government.

#### *For example . . .*

*The FAA's Practical Test Standards (PTS) for the instrument rating include the following for the TASK "AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CLEARANCES":*

1. Exhibits adequate knowledge of the elements related to ATC clearances and pilot/controller responsibilities, to include tower en route control and clearance void times.
2. Copies correctly, in a timely manner, the ATC clearance as issued.
3. Determines that it is possible to comply with the ATC clearance.
4. Interprets correctly the ATC clearance received and, when necessary, requests clarification, verification, or change.
5. Reads back correctly, in a timely manner, the ATC clearance in the sequence received.
6. Uses standard phraseology when reading back the clearance.
7. Sets the appropriate communication and navigation systems and transponder codes in compliance with the ATC clearance.

If a pilot successfully does all of those things, the Check Airman has no choice but to call it satisfactory performance. If a pilot *fails* to do any of those things, on the other hand, the Check Airman has no choice but to call it unsatisfactory performance. This same general principle applies to *all* tasks during the checkride.

It is *not* within the Check Airman's discretion to arbitrarily or subjectively say "I liked the way you did that" or "I didn't like the way you did that" based on anything other than what appears in the PTS. The pilot either met the published standards or else he or she did not. There is little or no room for the Check Airman's personal opinion.

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Let's consider a real-world situation as it pertains to the PTS shown on the previous page:

**TRACON:** Marconi zero niner, proceed direct DRAFT intersection.

**TRACON:** (*a moment later*) Marconi zero niner, did you copy?

**M09:** Oh, sorry – was that for Marconi zero niner?

**TRACON:** Affirmative. Marconi zero niner, I say again, proceed direct DRAFT intersection.

**M09:** Roger, direct DRAFT, Marconi zero niner. (*The pilot begins to study his low enroute chart.*)

**TRACON:** (*a moment later*) Marconi zero niner, did you copy your clearance?

**M09:** Uh, yeah . . . I mean roger . . . I mean affirmative . . . direct DRAFT, Marconi zero niner.

**TRACON:** That is correct, Marconi zero niner! I show you still on a three three zero degree heading – you never turned towards DRAFT back there when I told you to! You are entering a restricted area! I need you to make an IMMEDIATE turn to heading zero two zero to exit the restricted area!

**M09:** Two zero zero, Marconi zero niner.

**TRACON:** NEGATIVE, Marconi zero niner! The assigned heading was ZERO TWO ZERO! Advise when ready to copy a phone number – we need to talk.

This is a clear example of unsatisfactory performance. First of all, since this pilot is flying an AAS slant alpha or a slant uniform airplane with no point-to-point navigation capability, he should have instantly recognized that he was being given a clearance with which he could not possibly legally comply – he should have replied “unable direct DRAFT” and then either requested a vector on course or else requested direct to a radio navaid (such as a VOR or an NDB) that he could receive and navigate to from his present position; either would have been acceptable. It is *not* satisfactory to acknowledge a clearance and then not comply with it. And second of all, even if the controller *had* instructed him to proceed direct to a VOR or an NDB, if that pilot was unfamiliar with the radio navaid or was not within its operational service volume – i.e., he couldn't pick up a usable signal – then it still would have been necessary to query the controller, refuse the clearance and/or request an amended clearance. He should not be continuing to fly along in a straight line in what is now the wrong direction looking at the low enroute chart trying to figure out what to do next.

Also, the pilot's confused behavior and sloppy radio work makes it clear that he is not exercising solid, sound aeronautical decision making (ADM), nor does it represent good single-pilot resource management, nor is he acting as “the obvious master of the aircraft, with the successful outcome of each maneuver never in doubt,” which is the FAA's stated standard of satisfactory performance under Part 135. The performance above is certainly *not* within the PTS and is *not* acceptable coming from an experienced professional pilot; that would be a failed checkride.

CONCEPT II: General Grounds for Disqualification

Under the definition of “Unsatisfactory Performance,” the PTS lists these three things:

1. **Any action or lack of action by the applicant that requires corrective intervention by the examiner to maintain safe flight.** *(In other words, if the examiner feels that it is necessary for him or her to intervene to stay safe and/or legal, that is considered unsatisfactory performance.)*

The PTS clearly, specifically and unambiguously makes the following statement regarding all single-pilot checkrides: **“The examiner may not assist the applicant in the management of the aircraft, radio communications, navigational equipment and navigational charts.”** It doesn’t say “shouldn’t assist” or “is strongly discouraged from assisting.” It says the examiner absolutely, positively **MAY NOT** assist! The applicant is being tested on his or her ability to conduct single-pilot operations; the examiner must be regarded as a passive observer, a passenger who does not even know how to fly!

That means that if the applicant (or line pilot or pilot candidate) asks the designated pilot examiner, FAA inspector or Part 135 or Part 121 Check Airman, “can you take the plane for a minute while I get a chart out of my flight bag?” The person conducting the check is *legally obligated* to refuse. The pilot has to be able to do everything himself or herself, and this requires good cockpit organization and good workload management, ranging from simple things like having the necessary materials readily accessible to more complex things such as weather, navigation and performance planning.

2. **Consistently exceeding tolerances stated in the Objectives.** *(In other words, if the altitude tolerance is plus or minus 100 feet and you are very briefly or very occasionally a little more than 100 feet off, that’s OK. If you are not consistently within 100 feet, however, that is unsatisfactory.)*

The PTS allow a tolerance of 100 feet above and 100 feet below the assigned altitude. That’s a 200-foot window – roughly the height of a 20-story building. The FAA is saying, in effect, that you should be able to fly consistently within the height of a 20-story building . . . a fairly generous and entirely reasonable standard.

3. **Failure to take prompt corrective action when tolerances are exceeded.** *(In other words, if you are outside the tolerances but either not recognizing it or not taking prompt action to fix it, that is also unsatisfactory.)*

If a pilot is supposed to be maintaining 2,000 feet but accidentally wanders up to 2,105, for example, the pilot should say, “high, correcting” and smoothly but promptly initiate positive corrective action to bring the airplane back down to 2,000. That would still be within the bounds of satisfactory performance.

The PTS also says that the examiner “shall” (not *should*, but *shall*) create a realistic distraction during the flight “to evaluate the applicant’s ability to divide attention while maintaining safe flight.” Again, this is a federal requirement, not a suggestion.

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**CONCEPT III: The Use of Approved Memory Flows and Paper Checklists**

All tasks must be accomplished according to the operator's manual – in our case, the Austin's Air Service, LLC. Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook for the Cessna 210 Centurion or the Beech E55/58 Baron. That means you are REQUIRED to comply with ALL memory flows, paper checklists and established procedures, including ALL published, designated speeds, power settings, airplane configurations and so forth – unless an emergency or other special situation occurs that forces you to deviate.

A “memory flow” is a series of immediate-action items accomplished from memory *without* a checklist. Flows generally follow a logical, sequential pattern around or across the instrument panel. Paper checklists are usually used to back up a flow after a flow has been completed. Other checklists (such as the BEFORE STARTING and BEFORE TAKEOFF checklists) are often run as “do-lists” instead, with the pilot completing each item as the checklist prompts him or her to do so. Do it according to your operator's manual.

As it says in the FAA’s Practical Test Standards (PTS):

**“Throughout the practical test, the applicant is evaluated on the use of an appropriate checklist. Proper use is dependent on the specific task being evaluated. The situation may be such that the use of the checklist, while accomplishing elements of an objective, would be either unsafe or impracticable, especially in a single-pilot operation. In this case, a review of the checklist after the elements have been accomplished would be appropriate. Division of attention and proper visual scanning should be considered when using a checklist.”**

For example, the AAS policy for a cruise descent is to establish a stabilized 500-FPM rate of descent at approximately 160 knots indicated airspeed, using a throttle setting of 24” MP and a propeller speed of 2,400 RPM. (This is in accordance with FLIGHT PROCEDURE 6, DESCENT PLANNING, from the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook for the Cessna 210 Centurion.) Upon reaching the initial approach altitude in the terminal area, the pilot should then complete FLOW 8, also known as the In-Range flow, found in the same Handbook, and subsequently back it up by running the IN-RANGE checklist, with the end result being that the aircraft is stabilized in level flight at 120 knots indicated airspeed with the flaps at 10 degrees, ready to commence an instrument approach.

Although it is acceptable to deviate from these procedures *in a specific case* (such as an ATC request to maintain 110 or 130 instead of 120), there must be a *valid, legitimate reason*. The pilot may not alter or adapt the procedures to suit his or her individual habits and preferences. Moreover, deviations must be proportional to the situation.

After completing the In-Range flow, the pilot should then pull out the IN-RANGE checklist and read through it very carefully out loud, *actually verifying* that each and every item has been successfully and correctly accomplished. The pilot must do all of this in a highly disciplined, meticulous, cautious, attentive, and methodical manner. If the Check Airman or FAA aviation safety inspector conducting the checkride is not satisfied that the person taking the check is following company procedures and properly utilizing approved checklists, then the checkride will be failed.

For instance, suppose a pilot executes his initial descent into the terminal area by simply pulling back on the throttle by some random amount (not even *looking* at the manifold pressure gauge), then levels off simply by raising the nose, then pulls out a checklist, pretends to glance at it for a second and then puts it away again. The person conducting the check would at that point advise the pilot being checked that item #24 on the 8410-3 form (“Area Arrival”) was unsatisfactory.

## THE THREE CHECKRIDE REGULATIONS

There are three checkrides which you must satisfactorily complete on a recurring basis in order to remain legal for single-pilot IFR-135 operations. This is something the government takes very seriously. If the FAA discovers that a pilot flew for AAS under Part 135 without a current checkride, the company could be fined up to \$10,000 – *per flight leg!* The three checkrides are:

- **the VFR Competency Check (VCC) – FAR §135.293 – due every 12 calendar months**
- **the IFR Proficiency Check (IPC) – FAR §135.297 – due every 6 calendar months**
- **the Line Check – FAR §135.299 – due every 12 calendar months**

The recurrent checkrides are **100% identical** to the initial checkrides – the standards and requirements are exactly the same in every way.

The requirements for these three checkrides **may be met all at once in a single flight.** This is what we typically do at AAS because it vastly simplifies the recordkeeping and is much less confusing to the pilot.

In fact, because there is so much overlap and duplication between the three checkrides, it doesn't usually end up taking much longer to meet the requirements of all three of them than it does to meet the requirements of any one of them!

So your recurrent checkride will actually be a “triple” checkride, just like your initial checkride was. During this “triple” checkride, you will meet the requirements for all three Part 135 checkrides (the .293, the .297 and the .299) at once, in a single flight that normally lasts about 1-2 hours.

Part 135 checkrides may be conducted by FAA inspectors or by authorized Check Airmen.

## WHAT IS A CHECK AIRMAN?

A **Check Airman** is a pilot employed by the company and specifically authorized by the FAA to conduct initial and recurrent Part 135 checkrides. (A Check Airman is essentially the Part 135 equivalent of a designated pilot examiner.)

To become a Check Airman, one must complete a four-step process: first, one must complete the initial training program and become line qualified. Second, one must pass the company's approved instructor training program. Third, one must pass the company's approved Check Airman training program. At that point one may be recommended to the Flight Standards District Office to become a Check Airman. Fourth, one must complete an oral exam and a flight check with an FAA inspector (usually, but not always, the operator's Principal Operations Inspector). If the inspector approves the Check Airman candidate, he will then issue a Letter of Authorization (LOA) designating that line pilot as a Check Airman – for that specific aircraft type. To become a Check Airman in a different aircraft type, this entire process must be repeated.



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To *remain* a Check Airman, an individual must do the following three things:

1. Allow the FAA to conduct periodic surveillance in the form of “Observed Checkrides.” Under §135.339(a)(2), no person may act as a Check Airman “unless, within the preceding 24 calendar months, that person satisfactorily conducts a proficiency or competency check under the observation of an FAA inspector or an aircrew designated examiner employed by the operator.” During an Observed Checkride, an FAA inspector will accompany the Check Airman and a pilot being checked in the airplane and watch to ensure that the Check Airman is doing his job properly. They can do this, at their discretion, as often as they like.
2. Maintain a file of quarterly activity – including the number of checkrides given during that time and the outcomes of those checkrides.
3. Remain line qualified by taking a recurrent IFR-PIC Part 135 checkride every six months.

### HOW DOES THE FAA CONDUCT SURVEILLANCE ON CHECK AIRMEN?

The FSDO compares pass rates on Observed Checkrides to pass rates on all other checkrides. If it is noted that the pass rate on Observed Checkrides is 70% whereas the pass rate on all other checkrides is 95%, the Principal Operations Inspector may have reason to suspect that the checkrides are not being given properly when the FAA is not actually on board. For this reason, all checkrides will be conducted as if under direct observation by an FAA inspector.

Title 49 U.S. Code Sec. 1429(a) grants the FAA Administrator the authority to reexamine any civilian pilot essentially at any time and for virtually any reason, and if “the public interest in air safety” seems to warrant it, the Administrator may amend, modify, suspend or even revoke a pilot's certificate as necessary. This is (relatively) rarely invoked in Part 91 operations, but under Part 135 and 121 it is not uncommon.

#### **§44709 – Amendments, modifications, suspensions, and revocations of certificates**

1. *Reinspection and reexamination.* The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration may reinspect at any time a civil aircraft, aircraft engine, propeller, appliance, design organization, production certificate holder, air navigation facility, or air agency, or reexamine an airman holding a certificate issued under section 44703 of this title.
2. *Actions of the Administrator.*— The Administrator may issue an order amending, modifying, suspending, or revoking—
  - A. any part of a certificate issued under this chapter if—
    - i. the Administrator decides after conducting a reinspection, reexamination, or other investigation that safety in air commerce or air transportation and the public interest require that action.

If the FAA reexamines a Part 135 line pilot and finds him not competent (i.e., he or she fails the checkride), the FAA may then also reexamine the Check Airman who gave that line pilot his or her most recent checkride and/or reexamine any other line pilots who were given their most recent checkrides by that Check Airman. If the FAA subsequently determines that the Check Airman was not doing his or her job properly, the FAA will revoke that Check Airman's LOA, meaning he or she is no longer authorized to give checkrides. (After that, the FAA will typically reexamine *everyone* who received his or her most recent checkride from that Check Airman.)

**FAR §135.293**

The so-called “.293” is the **VFR Competency Check**, consisting of an **oral or written test** followed by a **flight check**. Both the oral or written test and the flight check are given by a company Check Airman, and you must satisfactorily complete them both every **twelve calendar months** or else AAS cannot use you as PIC.

The oral or written test required by paragraph (a) of §135.293 **must** include:

- (1) *the appropriate provisions of FAR Parts 61, 91, and 135 and the operations specifications and the manual of the certificate holder [AAS];*
- (2) *For each type of aircraft to be flown by the pilot, the aircraft powerplant, major components and systems, major appliances, performance and operating limitations, standard and emergency operating procedures, and the contents of the approved Aircraft Flight Manual or equivalent, as applicable;*
- (3) *For each type of aircraft to be flown by the pilot, the method of determining compliance with weight and balance limitations for takeoff, landing and en route operations;*
- (4) *Navigation and use of air navigation aids appropriate to the operation or pilot authorization, including, when applicable, instrument approach facilities and procedures;*
- (5) *Air traffic control procedures, including IFR procedures when applicable;*
- (6) *Meteorology in general, including the principles of frontal systems, icing, fog, thunderstorms, and windshear;*
- (7) *Procedures for--*
  - (i) *Recognizing and avoiding severe weather situations;*
  - (ii) *Escaping from severe weather situations, in case of inadvertent encounters, including low-altitude windshear; and*
  - (iii) *Operating in or near thunderstorms (including best penetrating altitudes), turbulent air (including clear air turbulence), icing, hail, and other potentially hazardous meteorological conditions; and*
- (8) *New equipment, procedures, or techniques, as appropriate.*

If a subject area is listed in paragraph (a), then we **must** test you on it, either orally or in writing.

You can therefore assume that you will be asked questions on all of the above topics. Be ready.

The flight check required by paragraph (b) of §135.293 . . .

*may include any of the maneuvers and procedures currently required for the original issuance of the particular pilot certificate required for the operations authorized and appropriate to the category, class and type of aircraft involved.*

In other words, I can ask you to demonstrate any maneuver or procedure currently in the FAA PTS for the commercial pilot certificate with an ASEL or AMEL rating, as appropriate.

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Now take a look at paragraph (d), which spells out the standard of competent performance which the pilot is expected and required to meet during the checkride:

*For the purpose of this part, competent performance of a procedure or maneuver by a person to be used as a pilot requires that the pilot be the obvious master of the aircraft, with the successful outcome of the maneuver never in doubt.*

As the FAA puts it (in FSIMS), **“in Part 121 and 135 operations, a higher standard of proficiency may be required than that required for initial pilot certification.”**

**FAR §135.297**

The so-called “.297” is the **Instrument Proficiency Check**, and it must be satisfactorily completed every **six calendar months**.

*(b) No pilot may use any type of precision instrument approach procedure under IFR unless, since the beginning of the 6th calendar month before that use, the pilot satisfactorily demonstrated that type of approach procedure.*

In other words, you may not shoot an ILS under Part 135 unless you have demonstrated an ILS for a Check Airman or an FAA inspector within the previous six months.

*No pilot may use any type of nonprecision approach procedure under IFR unless, since the beginning of the 6th calendar month before that use, the pilot has satisfactorily demonstrated either that type of approach procedure or any other two different types of nonprecision approach procedures.*

Because of this provision, we will do at least one ILS and at least two different types of non-precision approaches (for example, a VOR and an NDB) during the IPC. This will enable you to shoot an ILS as well as any type of non-precision approach while flying the line.

*The instrument approach procedure or procedures must include at least one straight-in approach, one circling approach, and one missed approach. Each type of approach procedure demonstrated must be conducted to published minimums for that procedure.*

So now you know that you will do *at least* the following approaches during your checkride:

1. an ILS down to minimums, followed by a missed approach
2. a second ILS approach down to minimums, followed by a landing
3. a non-precision approach down to minimums
4. a second non-precision approach (of a different type) down to minimums
5. a circling approach

If, for example, you shoot a circling NDB approach, a VOR approach and then two ILS approaches (the first to a missed and the second to a full stop) then you will meet all the requirements.

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Please bear with us if airplane availability, airplane equipment, air traffic control issues or wind conditions make it difficult to do everything that the FAA requires us to do. There are times when getting an IPC done involves a lot of flying and/or waiting. We apologize in advance for any delays we might face. Rest assured, we do the best we can to get the checkrides done in the minimum amount of time reasonably possible.

*(c) The instrument proficiency check required by paragraph (a) of this section consists of an oral or written equipment test and a flight check under simulated or actual IFR conditions.*

Once again, both a **written or oral test** and a flight check are required. Note the subjects about which you can expect to be quizzed.

*The equipment test includes questions on emergency procedures, engine operation, fuel and lubrication systems, power settings, stall speeds, best engine-out speed, propeller and supercharger operations, and hydraulic, mechanical, and electrical systems, as appropriate.*

§135.297 also specifies what we must cover during the flight check, and how well you must perform the maneuvers.

*The flight check includes navigation by instruments, recovery from simulated emergencies, and standard instrument approaches involving navigational facilities which that pilot is to be authorized to use. Each pilot taking the instrument proficiency check must show that standard of competence required by §135.293(d).*

It goes on to tell us that the IPC must . . .

*For a pilot in command of an airplane under §135.243(c), include the procedures and maneuvers for a commercial pilot certificate with an instrument rating.*

### **FAR §135.299**

The so-called “.299” is the **Line Check**, and it must be satisfactorily completed every **twelve calendar months**. It must . . .

*(2) Consist of at least one flight over one route segment; and  
(3) Include takeoffs and landings at one or more representative airports.  
In addition to the requirements of this paragraph, for a pilot authorized to conduct IFR operations, at least one flight shall be flown over a civil airway, an approved off-airway route, or a portion of either of them.*

Once again, every time you come in for a recurrent checkride we will meet the requirements for, and sign you off for, all three of these checkrides — the VCC, the IPC and the line check — in a single flight which usually lasts about 1 to 2 hours.

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**FAA FORM 8410-3**

Whether it is your initial checkride or a recurrent checkride, the FAA inspector or Check Airman who gives it will fill out a document called FAA Form 8410-3 – or an alternative company-specific form developed by the operator and approved by the FAA.

FAA Form 8410-3 is similar to FAA Form 8710, which is the Application for an Airman Certificate or Rating, except that when you pass a Part 135 checkride you do *not* receive a certificate or rating. Instead, you receive an “operating privilege:” the legal ability to act as PIC under IFR under Part 135.

Form 8410 is filled out in triplicate. The primary copy goes in your training file at our Principal Operations Base in Orlando. The secondary copy goes to the Orlando Flight Standards District Office, FSDO-15. You get to keep the tertiary copy. You do *not* have to carry it with you when you fly the way you would with a certificate or rating. You can throw it away if you want to. You may wish to hang on to it, however, because it proves that you are legally current. And as long as you are current to fly for us under Part 135 you are also current to fly on your own under Part 91. Your recurrent checkride is good as a §61.56 Flight Review for 24 calendar months and also counts to fulfill your §61.57(c) recent instrument experience requirement for 6 calendar months. If you own or rent an airplane, this may save you some time, money and trouble. (Think of it as a fringe benefit.)

*(See the example on the following page.)*

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<b>AIRMAN COMPETENCY/PROFICIENCY CHECK</b> FAR 135				LOCATION			DATE OF CHECK		
NAME OF AIRMAN <i>(last, first, middle initial)</i>				TYPE OF CHECK FAR 135.293 <input type="checkbox"/> FAR 135.297 <input type="checkbox"/> FAR 135.299 <input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>PILOT CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:</b>	Grade		MEDICAL INFORMATION: Date of Exam. Date of Birth _____ Class _____						
	Number								
EMPLOYED BY		BASED AT <i>(City, State)</i>		TYPE AIRPLANE <i>(Make/Model)</i> Simulator/Training Device <i>(Make/Model)</i>					
NAME OF CHECK AIRMAN		SIG. OF CHECK AIRMAN		FLIGHT TIME _____					
<b>FLIGHT MANEUVERS GRADE (S—Satisfactory U—Unsatisfactory)</b>									
<b>PILOT</b>				Air- craft	Simu- lator	Trng. Dev.	Air- craft	Simu- lator	Trng. Dev.
<b>PREFLIGHT</b>				<b>HELICOPTER</b>					
1. Equipment Examination <i>(Oral or written)</i>							1. Ground and/or Air Taxi		
2. Preflight Inspection							2. Hovering Manuevers		
3. Taxiing							3. Normal & Crosswind T.O. & Landings		
4. Powerplant Checks							4. High Altitude Takeoffs & Landings		
<b>TAKEOFFS</b>				<b>SEAPLANE OPERATIONS</b>					
5. Normal							1. Taxiing, Sailing, Docking		
6. Instrument							2. Step Taxi & Turns		
7. Crosswind							3. Glassy/Rough Water T.O./Landings		
8. With Simulated Powerplant Failure							4. Normal Takeoff & Landings		
9. Rejected Takeoff							5. Crosswind T.O. & Landings		
<b>INFLIGHT MANEUVERS</b>				<b>OTHER</b>					
10. Steep Turns							6. Ski Plane Ops. <i>(when applicable)</i>		
11. Approaches to Stalls							<b>GENERAL</b>		
12. Specific Flight Characteristics							7. Judgment		
13. Powerplant Failure							8. Crew Coordination		
<b>LANDINGS</b>				<b>AIRMAN COMPETENCY INFORMATION:</b>					
14. Normal							Demonstrated Current Knowledge FAR 135.293(a)		
15. From an ILS							Make/Model Expires (12 months) ( )		
16. Crosswind							Demonstrated Competency FAR 135.293(b)		
17. With Simulated Powerplant(s) Failure							Make/Model Expires (12 months) ( )		
18. Rejected Landing							Satisfactorily Demonstrated Line Checks		
19. From Circling Approach							FAR 135.299 Expires (12 months) ( )		
<b>EMERGENCIES</b>				<b>REMARKS</b>					
20. Normal and Abnormal Procedures							Satisfactorily Demonstrated IFR Proficiency		
21. Emergency Procedures							FAR 135.297 Expires ( 6 months) ( )		
<b>INSTRUMENT PROCEDURES</b>				<b>Use of Autopilot (is) (is not) Authorized.</b>					
22. Area Departure							Expires (12 months) ( )		
23. Holding									
24. Area Arrival									
25. ILS Approaches									
26. Other Instrument Approaches									
Approaches: NDB/ADF									
VOR									
ILS									
Other <i>(Specify)</i>									
27. Circling Approaches									
28. Missed Approaches									
29. Comm./Nav. Procedures									
30. Use of Auto. Pilot									
RESULT OF CHECK		<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved		CHECK AIRMAN'S PERFORMANCE <i>(FAA Only)</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory		
REGION		DISTRICT OFFICE			FAA INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE				

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The following items on FAA Form 8410-3 are applicable to us for an airplane / IFR-PIC checkride:

**PREFLIGHT**

1. Equipment Examination (*Oral or Written*)
2. Preflight Inspection
3. Taxiing
4. Powerplant Checks

**TAKEOFFS**

5. Normal
6. Instrument
7. Crosswind
8. With Simulated Powerplant Failure [multiengine only]
9. Rejected Takeoff

**INFLIGHT MANEUVERS**

10. Steep Turns
11. Approaches to Stalls
12. Specific Flight Characteristics [slow flight and/or minimum controllable airspeed clean and dirty]
13. Powerplant Failure [the approved company procedure]

**LANDINGS**

14. Normal
15. From an ILS [Note that this is a separate task from the ILS approach itself.]
16. Crosswind
17. With Simulated Powerplant(s) Failure [multiengine only]
18. Rejected Landing [go-around]
19. From Circling Approach [Note that this is a separate task from the circling approach itself.]

**EMERGENCIES**

20. Normal and Abnormal Procedures [alternator failure, gear failure, vacuum pump failure etc.]
21. Emergency Procedures [engine fire, runway incursion etc.]

**INSTRUMENT PROCEDURES**

22. Area Departure
23. Holding
24. Area Arrival
25. ILS Approaches
26. Other Instrument Approaches
27. Circling Approaches
28. Missed Approaches
29. Comm./Nav. Procedures

**GENERAL**

30. Judgment [listed as item #7 in the right column of form 8410]

### THREE GENERAL GUIDELINES

Here are three general guidelines for flying in a **disciplined, professional and safety-conscious manner**:

1. **USE YOUR COMPANY FLOWS AND CHECKLISTS FROM THIS HANDBOOK.**
2. **VOCALIZE** all flow and checklist items; *pay close attention to what you are doing!*
3. Proceed **CAUTIOUSLY, METHODICALLY** and **SYSTEMATICALLY**, not mindlessly or impulsively. (Do not rush, do not skip over things and do not take things for granted or assume that things are done.)

### FOR EXAMPLE . . .

#### THE WRONG WAY:

The pilot lifts off, immediately grabs the gear handle and absent-mindedly mutters, “gear up.”

#### THE RIGHT WAY:

1. Verify / vocalize: **“Positive rate of climb on two instruments.”**
2. Verify / vocalize: **“Clear of all obstacles.”**
3. Verify / vocalize: **“Out of usable runway.”**
4. Lightly apply the brakes to stop the wheels from spinning.
5. Select gear handle – UP and vocalize: **“Gear in transit.”** (*Use those precise three words! Never assume that the gear did what you want it to do just because you moved the handle. Confirm!*)
6. Verify / vocalize: **“Amber light – ON.”**
7. Verify / vocalize: **“Hydraulic power pack – OFF”**
8. flaps – ZERO

The first way was a mindless, impulsive act. The second way was a *deliberate, careful, methodical* procedure – a conscious, engaged process of observation and decision-making.

➔ **“Do it NOW, but do it with care.”** ➔

Nowhere in the FAA’s Practical Test Standards for the commercial pilot certificate or instrument rating will you find the adjective “fast.” What you *will* repeatedly see, however, are the adjective “prompt” and the adverb “promptly.” It is better to do the right thing at a normal speed rather than the wrong thing fast!

Thus, *precision, accuracy, care, attentiveness* and *smoothness* are much more important than swiftness in the cockpit.

Accordingly, maintaining a calm, focused, serious, disciplined demeanor is preferable to becoming rushed, nervous, distracted, overloaded, cocky or complacent – any of which can lead to rash or erratic behavior and possible errors.



## THE TASKS

(A Hypothetical Example)

All AAS flows are shown below in *italics*.

All AAS checklists are shown below in ALL CAPS.

For complete and detailed information on how each task should be done, refer to the Austin's Air Service, LLC Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.

For complete and detailed information on the standards for minimum acceptable performance, refer to the FAA Instrument and Commercial Practical Test Standards.

1. **The Knowledge Test** – You will be given an oral or written test that meets the requirements of §135.293(a) and §135.297(c).
2. **Preflight Inspection** – Follow the Pre-/Post-Flight Procedures Sheet. Don't miss anything that could adversely affect the safety or legality of the flight.
3. **Taxiing** – Taxi at a steady and reasonable speed. *Stay on the yellow taxiway centerline!* Remember to perform your *Taxi Instrument Check* flow very carefully, and exactly as published in the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
4. **Powerplant Checks** – Follow the BEFORE TAKEOFF and ENGINE RUNUP checklists. (Refer to the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook for further explanation and amplification of the procedures they contain.)
5. **Normal or Crosswind Takeoff** – Perform FLOW 3 (also known as “lights, camera, action”) when cleared onto the runway. Acquire and maintain the centerline. Perform FLOW 4, which contains your acceleration checks, as well as FLOW 5 prior to raising the landing gear. Perform FLOW 6 (the *Climb* flow) at the appropriate time.
6. **Instrument Takeoff** – This will not be a zero-zero takeoff. You will be wearing a view-limiting device to simulate taking off in below-standard visibility conditions (under 1 statute mile). You can raise your view-limiting device so that you can see about two runway centerline stripes ahead to simulate taking off in reduced visibility conditions, such as fog. Once you have lifted off you will go fully under simulated instrument conditions.
7. **Crosswind Takeoff** – Utilize proper crosswind takeoff technique. Begin the roll with full aileron deflection into the wind, reducing the deflection as speed increases. Use rudder and nosewheel steering to maintain the runway centerline. Lift off into a slight bank, i.e., a sideslip, and then transition immediately into a coordinated, wings-level attitude, crabbing as necessary to track the extended runway centerline (if you are VFR). If you are IFR, fly your assigned heading.
8. **Takeoff With Simulated Powerplant Failure** – If your checkride is in a Baron, the Check Airman will simulate an engine failure on the takeoff roll. Respond by promptly closing both throttles.

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9. **Rejected Takeoff** – The Check Airman will say “abort the takeoff.” He will *not* say this, however, until after you have completed verbally running your acceleration checks as published in FLOW 4, *Normal Takeoff*. When he does say this, smoothly retard the throttle all the way to the idle stop. (Don’t yank it back violently, as this is abusive to the engine.) Remain on the centerline at all times. If the Check Airman says, “continue,” then you may resume the takeoff as instructed by tower.
10. **Steep Turns** – Configure the airplane as published in the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook. Perform steep turns to the left and right as instructed.
11. **Approaches to Stalls** – Configure the airplane for a power-on or power-off stall as published in the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook and as instructed by your Check Airman. Perform the maneuver as instructed, recovering at the first sign of an impending stall. (You may define “first sign” however you like, as long as you recover prior to the actual stall break.) Use the stall recovery / go-around procedure published in the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
12. **Specific Flight Characteristics [slow flight clean and dirty]** – Configure the airplane as published in the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook and as instructed by your Check Airman. Perform the maneuver as instructed.
13. **Powerplant Failure** – Execute the *Engine Failure* flow (FLOW 19) followed by the ENGINE FAILURE checklist as published in the Handbook. If your Check Airman tells you that the engine has not restarted, execute the *Engine Secure* flow followed by the FORCED LANDINGS checklist.
14. **Normal Landings** – Touch down smoothly on the runway centerline at the airplane’s approximate stalling speed as required by the PTS, with the airplane’s longitudinal (nose-to-tail) axis aligned with the airplane’s direction of motion.
15. **Landing from an ILS [Note that this is a separate task from the ILS approach itself.]** – Follow the *Landing From an ILS* procedure, listed as INSTRUMENT PROCEDURE 2 from the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
16. **Crosswind Landing** – This will be the same as item #14, except that you must use bank to compensate for drift and keep the airplane over the centerline while using opposite rudder to keep the airplane’s nose pointed straight down the centerline. You will touch down in a slight sideslip, on the upwind wheel first, followed by the downwind wheel, followed by the nose. On the runway, nosewheel and rudder steering will be used to keep the airplane on the centerline while the aileron deflection is smoothly increased to full.
17. **Landing With Simulated Powerplant Failure** – If your checkride is in a Baron, your Check Airman will simulate an engine failure during the flight. After you have correctly carried out your emergency procedures, your Check Airman will configure one engine for a zero-thrust condition and from that point on you will simulate that it is fully secured. Land as normally as possible.

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18. **Rejected Landing [go-around]** – Smoothly and promptly execute the *Go-Around* flow (FLOW 18) from the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
19. **Landing from a Circling Approach [Note that this is a separate task from the circling approach itself.]** – Land as normally as possible after executing a circling approach.
20. **Normal and Abnormal Procedures [alternator failure, gear failure, vacuum pump failure etc.]** – Follow the appropriate normal or emergency checklist carefully, one item at a time. (Refer to the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook for amplification of the procedures they contain.)
21. **Emergency Procedures [engine fire, runway incursion etc.]** – Execute the appropriate emergency procedures carefully and correctly, one item at a time. (Refer to the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook for amplification of the procedures they contain.)
22. **Area Departure** – Correctly follow whatever departure procedure you have been assigned. Perform the *Climb* flow and the *Cruise* flow (FLOW 6 and FLOW 7) and then run the CRUISE checklist.
23. **Holding** – Hold as assigned. Use an entry that keeps you in the protected holding airspace. Perform the *In-Range* flow (FLOW 8) and then back it up with the IN-RANGE checklist prior to reaching the holding fix.
24. **Area Arrival** – Listen to and promptly and correctly comply with all ATC instructions, clearances and advisories . Listen to ATIS or ASOS or AWOS as soon as able. Perform the *In-Range* flow (FLOW 8) and then back it up with the IN-RANGE checklist at an appropriate time.
25. **ILS Approaches** – Correctly execute the published precision instrument approach procedure. Follow the *ILS Approach* procedure (INSTRUMENT PROCEDURE 1) from the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
26. **Other Instrument Approaches** – Correctly execute the published non-precision instrument approach procedure. Follow the *Non-Precision Approach* procedure (INSTRUMENT PROCEDURE 3) from the AAS Initial and Recurrent Flight Training Handbook.
27. **Circling Approaches**– Keep your pattern close in and high; remain within the designated circling area, based on your actual speed. Do not descend below the circling MDA until you are within approximately 30 degrees of the extended runway centerline and landing is *assured*. Be sure to carefully read and study INSTRUMENT PROCEDURE 4 from the Handbook.
28. **Missed Approaches** – Promptly and correctly execute the published missed approach procedure at the proper time in accordance with INSTRUMENT PROCEDURE 5.
29. **Comm./Nav. Procedures** – Use proper radio phraseology and technique as published in the Aeronautical Information Manual. (See page 12 of this booklet for an example.)

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30. **Judgment** – Again, this is actually listed as item #7 on the right-side column of the 8410-3 form. It is the only item on that side applicable to us (since we don't do seaplane, ski plane or helicopter operations.) Let's take a look at what the FAA has to say about risk management and aeronautical decision making. The following is an excerpt from the PTS:

**“The examiner shall evaluate the applicant’s ability throughout the practical test to use good aeronautical decision making procedures in order to evaluate risks. The examiner shall accomplish this requirement by developing scenarios that incorporate as many tasks as possible to evaluate the applicant’s risk management in making safe aeronautical decisions. For example, the examiner may develop a scenario that incorporates weather decisions and performance planning. The applicant’s ability to utilize all the assets available in making a risk analysis to determine the safest course of action is essential for satisfactory performance. The scenarios should be realistic and within the capabilities of the aircraft used for the practical test.”**

If, for example, the pilot attempted to shoot the ILS 2C approach into Nashville International Airport while actually referring to the ILS 2R approach plate, or misidentified the BNA VOR as the localizer and then tried to shoot the approach with the VOR tuned in, that pilot would not only “unsat” the ILS (item #15), he would also get an “unsat” on judgment.

Likewise, if the pilot tried to initiate a takeoff into known icing conditions in a non-ice approved, non-ice-equipped airplane, the Check Airman would instruct him to abort the takeoff and then taxi back to the ramp – that pilot would get an “unsat” on judgment even though none of the other items on the 8410-3 were specifically involved.

# U. S. Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration

## Instrument Rating Practical Test Standards *for a* Precision Instrument Approach

1. Exhibits adequate knowledge of the elements of an ILS instrument approach procedure. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Selects and complies with the appropriate ILS instrument approach procedure to be performed. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Establishes two-way radio communications with ATC, as appropriate to the phase of flight or approach segment, and uses proper radio communications phraseology and technique. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Selects, tunes, identifies and confirms the operational status of ground and aircraft navigation equipment to be used for the approach procedure. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Complies with all clearances issued by ATC or the examiner. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Advises ATC or examiner any time the aircraft is unable to comply with a clearance. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Establishes the appropriate aircraft configuration and airspeed, considering turbulence and wind shear, and completes the aircraft checklist items appropriate to the phase of flight. \_\_\_\_\_ [*Note: in our case, this means accomplishing the IN-RANGE flow and then backing it up with the IN-RANGE checklist prior to intercepting the localizer and then executing the TBGUMPS flow shortly after glideslope intercept.*]
8. Maintains, prior to beginning the final approach segment, specified altitude within 100 feet, heading or course within 10° and airspeed within 10 knots. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Applies the necessary adjustments to the published DH and visibility criteria for the aircraft approach category when required. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Establishes an initial rate of descent at the point where the electronic glideslope is intercepted, which approximates that required for the aircraft to follow the glideslope to DH. \_\_\_\_\_ [*Note: in our case, this means about 120 knots / 600 feet per minute for a standard 3° glideslope, adjusting as necessary for headwinds or tailwinds, UNLESS otherwise instructed by ATC.*]
11. Allows, while on the final approach segment, no more than three-quarter-scale deflection of either the localizer or glideslope indications and maintains the specified airspeed within 10 knots. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Avoids descent below the DH before initiating a missed approach procedure or transitioning to a normal landing approach.
13. Initiates immediately the missed approach procedure when, at the DH, the required visual references for the intended landing runway are not distinctly visible and identifiable. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Transitions to a normal landing approach when the aircraft is continuously in a position from which a descent to a landing on the intended runway can be made at a normal rate of descent using normal maneuvers. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Instrument Rating Practical Test Standards *for a* Non-Precision Instrument Approach

15. Exhibits adequate knowledge of the elements related to an instrument approach procedure. \_\_\_\_\_
16. Selects and complies with the appropriate instrument approach procedure to be performed. \_\_\_\_\_
17. Establishes two-way radio communications with ATC, as appropriate to the phase of flight or approach segment, and uses proper radio communications phraseology and technique. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Selects, tunes, identifies and confirms the operational status of navigation equipment to be used for the approach procedure. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Complies with all clearances issued by ATC or the examiner. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Recognizes if heading indicator and/or attitude indicator is inaccurate or inoperative, advises controller, and proceeds with approach. \_\_\_\_\_ [*Note: in our case, this means running the VACUUM PUMP FAILURE emergency checklist and then configuring the airplane for partial-panel flying prior to beginning the approach.*]
21. Advises ATC or examiner any time the aircraft is unable to comply with a clearance. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Establishes the appropriate aircraft configuration and airspeed, considering turbulence and wind shear, and completes the aircraft checklist items appropriate to the phase of flight. \_\_\_\_\_ [*Note: in our case, this means accomplishing the IN-RANGE flow and then backing it up with the IN-RANGE checklist prior to intercepting the final approach course and then executing the TBGUMPS flow at the final approach fix or appropriate final descent point if no FAF is published.*]
23. Maintains, prior to beginning the final approach segment, altitude within 100 feet, heading within 10° and allows less than a full-scale deflection of the CDI and maintains airspeed within 10 knots. \_\_\_\_\_
24. Applies the necessary adjustments to the published MDA and visibility criteria for the aircraft approach category when required. \_\_\_\_\_
25. Establishes a rate of descent and track that will ensure arrival at the MDA prior to reaching the MAP with the aircraft continuously in a position from which descent to a landing on the intended runway can be made at a normal rate using normal maneuvers.
26. Allows, while on the final approach segment, no more than three-quarter-scale deflection of the CDI and maintains airspeed within 10 knots. \_\_\_\_\_
27. Maintains the MDA, when reached, within +100 / -0 feet to the MAP. \_\_\_\_\_
28. Executes the missed approach procedure when the required visual references for the intended landing runway are not distinctly visible and identifiable at the MAP. \_\_\_\_\_
29. Executes a normal landing from a straight-in or circling approach when instructed by the examiner. \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT'S ON THE KNOWLEDGE TEST?

## **Subpart G – Crewmember Testing Requirements**

### **Sec. 135.293**

#### **Initial and recurrent pilot testing requirements.**

(a) No certificate holder may use a pilot, nor may any person serve as a pilot, unless, since the beginning of the 12th calendar month before that service, that pilot has passed a written or oral test, given by the Administrator or an authorized check pilot, on that pilot's knowledge in the following areas--

(1) The appropriate provisions of Parts 61, 91, and 135 of this chapter and the operations specifications and the manual of the certificate holder;

(2) For each type of aircraft to be flown by the pilot, the aircraft powerplant, major components and systems, major appliances, performance and operating limitations, standard and emergency operating procedures, and the contents of the approved Aircraft Flight Manual or equivalent, as applicable;

(3) For each type of aircraft to be flown by the pilot, the method of determining compliance with weight and balance limitations for takeoff, landing and en route operations;

(4) Navigation and use of air navigation aids appropriate to the operation or pilot authorization, including, when applicable, instrument approach facilities and procedures;

(5) Air traffic control procedures, including IFR procedures when applicable;

(6) Meteorology in general, including the principles of frontal systems, icing, fog, thunderstorms, and windshear, and, if appropriate for the operation of the certificate holder, high altitude weather;

(7) Procedures for--

(i) Recognizing and avoiding severe weather situations;

(ii) Escaping from severe weather situations, in case of inadvertent encounters, including low-altitude windshear (except that rotorcraft pilots are not required to be tested on escaping from low-altitude windshear); and

(iii) Operating in or near thunderstorms (including best penetrating altitudes), turbulent air (including clear air turbulence), icing, hail, and other potentially hazardous meteorological conditions; and

(8) New equipment, procedures, or techniques, as appropriate.

### **Sec. 135.297**

#### **Pilot in command: Instrument proficiency check requirements.**

(c) The instrument proficiency check required by paragraph (a) of this section consists of an oral or written equipment test and a flight check under simulated or actual IFR conditions. The equipment test includes questions on emergency procedures, engine operation, fuel and lubrication systems, power settings, stall speeds, best engine-out speed, propeller and supercharger operations, and hydraulic, mechanical, and electrical systems, as appropriate.

GRACE PROVISIONS

**FAR §135.301**

The FARs do give us some latitude. FAR §135.301 provides two ways to make staying in compliance easier for both operators and pilots. First, it gives us a three-month window in which to accomplish checkrides.

*(a) If a crewmember who is required to take a test or a flight check under this part, completes the test or flight check in the calendar month before or after the calendar month in which it is required, that crewmember is considered to have completed the test or check in the calendar month in which it is required.*

To understand and use this regulation, it is helpful to call the months of the year by their numbers rather than their names. For example, January is “month 1” and December is “month 12.”

Let’s say that you pass your initial “triple” checkride in month 8 (August). You will be due for a recurrent checkride in month 2 (February) of the following year, six months later. In that case, you can pass it in month 1 (January), in month 2 (February) or in month 3 (March) and as far as the FAA is concerned for compliance and record-keeping purposes you still passed it in month 2 (February).

In this example February is considered your “**base month,**” and your next checkride is still due six months or twelve months from February regardless of whether you actually passed your last checkride in January, February, or March. January is your “**early base month**” and March is your “**late grace month.**” Thus, as a practical matter, you have a three-month window in which to pass your checkrides.

FAR §135.301 also gives a Check Airman the legal ability to “time out” a checkride if it is not going well. He can then provide some additional training and resume the checkride.

*(b) If a pilot being checked under this subpart fails any of the required maneuvers, the person giving the check may give additional training to the pilot during the course of the check. In addition to repeating the maneuvers failed, the person giving the check may require the pilot being checked to repeat any other maneuvers that are necessary to determine the pilot's proficiency. If the pilot being checked is unable to demonstrate satisfactory performance to the person conducting the check, the certificate holder may not use the pilot, nor may the pilot serve, as a flight crewmember in operations under this part until the pilot has satisfactorily completed the check.*

**The operative word here is “MAY.”** This is entirely at the judgment and discretion of the Check Airman. He does not *have* to give you a second chance. But he *can*, if he feels that it is reasonably justified.

Everyone has an occasional mental lapse. If you fail to execute one maneuver within standards and the rest of the checkride was fine, then your Check Airman is very likely to exercise his FAR §135.301(b) authority, suspend the checkride, give a little bit of guidance, and then let you try the maneuver again. This is left entirely up to his judgment, however, so do *not* take it for granted!



## GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY – CHECK YEAR AND REVISION NUMBER

FAA Order 8900.1, the Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS), is essentially a massive manual published online by the FAA to provide guidance to their inspectors with respect to how to do their jobs, i.e., how to conduct surveillance and oversight of airmen and operators. FSIMS is available to the general public at <http://fsims.faa.gov/> and pilots are encouraged to study it – although its size is admittedly somewhat intimidating. Volume 3 (General Technical Administration), Chapter 19 (Training Programs and Airman Qualifications), Section 7 (Flightcrew Qualification Curriculum Segments) addresses the issue of how the FAA interprets §135.301(b): *(The section below is cut and pasted directly from FSIMS.)*

### **3-1281 CONDUCT OF PROFICIENCY AND COMPETENCY CHECKS**

**B. Training to Proficiency. When a check airman determines that an event is unsatisfactory, the check airman may conduct training and repeat the testing of that event. This provision is made in the interest of fairness and to avoid undue hardship and expense for airmen and operators. Training may not be conducted, however, without recording the failure of these events. The quality control of a training program is accomplished, among other means, by identifying those events on checks which crewmembers fail. POIs must ensure the following guidance is supplied to operators and check airmen concerning the practice of training to proficiency:**

- 30. Training and checking cannot be conducted simultaneously. When training is required, the check must be temporarily suspended, training conducted, and then the check resumed.**
- 31. When training to proficiency is required, the check airman must record the events which were initially failed and in which training was given.**
- 32. When training to proficiency is conducted and the check is subsequently completed within the original session, the overall grade for the check may be recorded as satisfactory. When the training required to reach proficiency cannot be completed in the original checking session, the check must be recorded as unsatisfactory and the crewmember entered into requalification training.**
- 33. When training to proficiency is required and it is practical to do so, the remaining events of the flight test phase should be completed before training in the failed event is conducted. If it is more practical, the failed event may be repeated at the end of a logical sequence. For example, training on a stall might be conducted at altitude after all other air work has been completed, but before returning to the traffic pattern.**
- 34. If, after having received training, the airman fails an event again, the failure must be recorded, and the crewmember must be entered into requalification training.**

If, for example, a pilot “unsats” a steep turn, the FAA requires that the Check Airman advise the pilot (or pilot candidate) that he or she has failed the maneuver. *If* both the pilot *and* the Check Airman agree to continue the checkride at that point, the Check Airman *must* now require the pilot to demonstrate every other maneuver that can be done during this phase of the flight – slow flight, stalls, simulated engine failure and so forth. *If* all of those things are satisfactory, *then* the Check Airman may give some instruction and then allow the pilot to try the steep turn again. To use another example, suppose a pilot “unsats” an NDB approach. If the mutual decision to continue is made, the Check Airman will have the pilot shoot all the other approaches (VOR, localizer, ILS etc.) and if they are satisfactory then additional instruction may be given and the NDB may be re-attempted. Note that the Check Airman is also allowed and even encouraged to require the pilot being checked to go back and re-do any other tasks, maneuvers or procedures that may be necessary to leave the Check Airman completely convinced that the pilot is fully proficient.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY – CHECK YEAR AND REVISION NUMBER

Remember that if you take a checkride with an FAA inspector you will **not** have this “escape clause.” (FAA inspectors may not give flight instruction.) If you fail a maneuver, then the checkride is immediately failed. The inspector must advise you that you have failed the checkride and ask if you wish to continue. If you do elect to continue the checkride you might be able to satisfactorily accomplish some other tasks, but the checkride will still be a bust and will have to be repeated later after you have received remedial instruction. You may only have to repeat the maneuver or maneuvers you failed, but you may be asked to repeat the entire checkride. Regardless of what task or tasks tripped you up, *as of the moment you fail a checkride AAS may no longer use you as a pilot under Part 135 until you successfully re-take the checkride.* This is true even if you failed it on the first day of your early base month!

Incredible and bizarre as it may seem, active line pilots have occasionally busted recurrent checkrides. Some pilots flying the line by themselves with no supervision grow overconfident, sloppy, lazy and complacent. They may even become cocky and arrogant since doing the same thing every day makes them very good at it. Being good at what you do is certainly a good thing, but allowing it to lull you into careless and reckless behavior is a bad thing.

If a pilot shows up totally unprepared for a checkride, having completely forgotten all his company flows, checklists and procedures (even though he has known for the last 6 months that the checkride was coming), then he may fail it. It’s rare, unnecessary and unfortunate, but it does happen. Don’t let it happen to you; *always* use your approved company flows, checklists and other procedures. Do not allow yourself to become complacent and overconfident. The flows, checklists and procedures exist for good reasons – **USE THEM**, not just on checkrides but on *every leg*! Fly like a professional pilot; fly like a cockpit voice recorder and a flight data recorder are diligently recording your every word and move.

Always ask yourself “is what I’m about to do the most cautious, sensible and conservative thing I could choose to do, or am I about to take an avoidable risk just to save a little extra effort?” Some people like to ask themselves, “how would this look on an NTSB accident report?”

When flying, strive to avoid doing anything you wouldn’t be proud to do with an instructor or examiner sitting next to you watching. Always try to impress that imaginary observer with your solid judgment, procedural discipline, safe, proficient practices and organized, methodical demeanor. If you maintain that attitude, you will constantly be ready for your next checkride . . . as well as your next job interview!

## RECURRENT GROUND TRAINING

FAR §135.351 requires that “each certificate holder [such as AAS, Inc.] must ensure that each crewmember receives recurrent training and is adequately trained and currently proficient for the type aircraft and crewmember position involved.”

It goes on to say that “recurrent ground training for crewmembers must include at least . . . a quiz or other review to determine the crewmember’s knowledge of the aircraft and crewmember position involved.”

You will come due for recurrent ground training 12 months after the month in which you passed your initial Part 135 IFR-PIC ground training. You will also come due for *equipment-specific* recurrent ground training 12 months after the month in which you passed your initial Baron ground training.

## WHAT ARE A CHECK AIRMAN'S POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

Check Airmen do not have unlimited authority. Let's take a moment to discuss what, under the Federal Aviation Regulations, a Check Airman *must* do, what a Check Airman *can* do and what a Check Airman *cannot* do.

### I. What a Check Airman *Must* Do

1. A Check Airman must always give a checkride that meets the requirements of the applicable regulations as well as the operator's approved training and testing program. If something is specifically required (and not waived by a letter from the POI), he or she is not allowed to skip it or leave it out – whether it's a required subject area for a knowledge test or a required task on a flight check. An ILS approach and two different non-precision approaches, for example, are specifically required by §135.297. The Check Airman therefore must include them in the checkride.
2. The Check Airman must use the Practical Test Standards (or any other stricter standard approved by the FAA for that particular operator) in determining satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance. The maximum permitted altitude excursion for maintaining MDA, for instance, is +100/-0. The maximum permitted angular deviation for a localizer or glideslope is three-quarter scale.
3. The Check Airman must fail a pilot if that pilot's performance is "unsatisfactory" as defined by the PTS and interpreted by FSIMS and §135.293(d) – "competent performance of a procedure or maneuver requires that the pilot be the obvious master of the aircraft, with the successful outcome of the maneuver never in doubt."
4. The Check Airman must correctively intervene if the safety or legality of the flight is in jeopardy by taking appropriate action.
5. The Check Airman must designate a task as unsatisfactory if such corrective intervention is required.
6. The Check Airman must tell the pilot being checked as soon as practical if any task, maneuver or procedure is deemed unsatisfactory.
7. If the Check Airman decides that he or she is willing to continue the checkride after an unsatisfactory task, maneuver or procedure, he or she must ask the pilot being checked if he or she also wishes to continue.
8. The Check Airman must "cause a realistic distraction" to evaluate the pilot's ability to divide attention among multiple tasks.

## II. What a Check Airman *Can* Do

1. The Check Airman can include in the checkride any other legitimate instrument/commercial pilot maneuver. According to §135.293(b), “the extent of the competency check shall be determined by the Administrator or authorized check pilot conducting the competency check. The competency check may include any of the maneuvers and procedures currently required for the original issuance of the particular pilot certificate required for the operations authorized and appropriate to the category, class and type of aircraft involved.” According to §135.297(c)(1)(ii), “the instrument proficiency check must, for a pilot in command of an airplane under §135.243(c), include the procedures and maneuvers for a commercial pilot certificate with an instrument rating.”
2. The Check Airman can use his or her judgment, experience and discretion to stop the checkride at any time that it becomes clear a satisfactory outcome is highly unlikely. The Check Airman is under no obligation to invoke the grace provision or provide remedial training, although he or she may freely choose to do so.

## III. What a Check Airman *Cannot* Do

1. The Check Airman cannot make up his or her own standards and procedures. He or she must abide by the PTS (or any other stricter standard approved by the FAA for that particular operator) and the operator’s FAA-approved procedures.
2. For single-pilot crew members (like we use at AAS), the Check Airman cannot assist the pilot being checked in any way. This includes tuning in radio frequencies, getting out or putting away charts or approach plates, communicating with ATC etc. It must be as if the pilot being checked is alone in the airplane with no help.
3. The Check Airman cannot ask the pilot being checked to do anything dangerous or illegal, such as aerobatic maneuvers, formation flying, deliberate unusual attitudes in icing conditions, flying through IMC in controlled airspace without an instrument clearance, partial-panel flying in a thunderstorm etc.
4. The Check Airman cannot include in the knowledge test portion of the checkride anything not applicable to the operator. Using AAS as an example, I could not ask you questions about:
  - A. High-altitude weather and oxygen systems.
  - B. Turbochargers or turbine engines.
  - C. Helicopter, seaplane or ski plane operations.
  - D. Use of autopilot systems.
  - E. Use of an MEL.
  - F. The deployment of passenger escape slides.
5. The Check Airman cannot include in the flight check portion of the checkride anything not applicable to the operator. Once again using AAS as an example, I could not ask you to demonstrate:
  - A. Spin recovery.
  - B. Soft-field takeoff techniques.
  - C. Inverted flight.
  - D. APU starting procedures.
  - E. GPS approaches.
  - F. Category IIIb landings.