Preparing for the CFI Practical Test

Getting Organized

The CFI oral will test your knowledge of all subject areas required of private, commercial, instrument, and CFI candidates.  This will include knowledge of the relevant FAR’s, aerodynamics, fundamentals of flight, navigation, weather, performance, ground reference maneuvers, approaches and landings, instrument maneuvers, slow flight, stalls, spins, instructor responsibilities and limitations, emergency procedures, and fundamentals of instruction.

That’s quite a list, but even more is expected of a CFI candidate.  The candidate must convince the examiner that they are able to apply and teach the above subject matter in a way that effectively communicates these concepts to a student, taking into consideration the learning principles found in the Fundamentals of Instruction.

For the oral portion of the practical test, it is highly recommended that the CFI candidate have up to date FAA Handbooks, Advisory Circulars, ACS Standards, FAR/AIM, Relevant Sectional & Terminal Charts, Chart Supplement, POH, Airframe, Engine/Propeller Logbooks, and AD Compliance Sheet.  The CFI candidate will have brief lesson plans prepared with key speaking points and reference it to teach the required lesson during the oral. A sequential four part format is recommended for teaching most flight and ground lessons as follows:

1. Why – what is the reason why we are learning this? Use a scenario to make this point or if a scenario is not applicable, state the reason why this lesson or skill is useful. For example, a meaningful scenario when teaching a lesson on Rectangular Course would be to relate it to flying a traffic pattern when landing.
2. How – How specifically is the task performed? For example, when teaching the lesson on Chandelles, it would start (like all maneuvers) with the set-up (appropriate area, clearing turn, power to achieve the desired starting airspeed, altitude, and configuration. It would be described as a climbing 180° turn that is comprised of two sections – the first 90° performed at a constant 30°bank and increasing pitch with the second 90°performed at a constant pitch and decreasing bank while also discussing how controlling P-Factor and adverse yaw will result in proper performance of the maneuver, etc. etc.
3. Common Errors – what are the most common errors as described in the Airplane Flying Handbook? Pick the most common few (maybe 3-4) and not only describe them but also how they can be avoided.
4. ACS Standards – how will this task be evaluated? For example, in teaching a lesson on Steep Turns, Private ACS standards would be described as a 45° bank +/-5°, altitude maintained +/- 100’, and airspeed maintained +/- 10 kts, and rollout on initial heading +/- 10°.

By formatting your lessons plans this way you will achieve consistent delivery and one that will lend itself to teaching whether in a ground lesson or in flight. Lesson plans should be no more than 1-3 pages in bullet point format (Word or PPT) along with appropriate charts or illustrations from FAA resources such as the Pilot Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge, Airplane Flying Handbook, relevant ACs etc. Lesson plan content should follow the 4 part format above.

Important Notes Regarding Lesson Plan Preparation

For the Flight Instructor Airplane Single Engine Land practical test, approximately 70 lesson plans will need to be prepared. One of best resources I have found is a book by James Kelly titled Certificated Flight Instructor Preparation Guide. This book is out of print, but James Kelly approved it to be available in digital form on my website. Although it is out of date and written according to the older PTS, it is still a useful and simple resource and a good starting point to guide your lesson plan development. Lesson plans are available for purchase from many sources, however if you decide to go that route, make sure you edit them according to your own choice of content, sequence, and style. In other words, make them your own. I have seen the best results by writing the lesson plans yourself from scratch using the Airplane Flying Handbook and Pilot Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge as the primary resources.

The FOI portion should be prepared differently from the rest of the lesson plans. Here, you are not teaching FOI but are demonstrating that you know how to incorporate the principles in the Aviation Instructor’s Handbook. To do this you should have a clear and practical example of each element. For example, if the question is “What will you do to incorporate perception and insight in your teaching” – read Chapter 3 pages 7-8 and prepare your example. Every element in the ACS has a source to explain the concept or principle from which you can create your teaching example. It is not enough to know the principle. You must have an example that shows how you will incorporate it in your teaching. For instance, you can expect the examiner to ask that you teach a particular flight lesson and incorporate a specific FOI task into the lesson. For example, “teach me the Steep Turns lesson and incorporate the elements of FOI Task F” In this example, Task F is Elements of Teaching That Include Risk Management so here you would be expected to teach the Steep Turn lesson and incorporate the elements of FOI Task F appropriate to the Steep Turns lesson such as Best Practices, Teaching Risk Identification, Assessment, and Mitigation to name a few of the relevant Task F elements. You will decide how these elements can be included as you teach the lesson.

Resources

The resources contained in the following list are essential to be understood and as appropriate, included in your lesson plans as indicated in the ACS at the beginning of each task.

14 CFR Part 1 Definitions & Abbreviations

14 CFR Part 23 Airworthiness Standards

14 CFR Part 39 Airworthiness Directives

14 CFR Part 43 Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance

14 CFR Part 61 Certification of Pilots & Flight Instructors

14 CFR Part 67 Medical Standards & Certification

14 CFR Part 68 Requirements for Operating Without a Medical Certificate

14 CFR Part 91 General Operating & Flight Rules

49 CFR Part 830 Notification & Reporting of Aircraft Accidents & Incidents

49 CFR Part 1552 Flight Schools (TSA Requirements)

AC 00-6 Aviation Weather

AC 00-45 Aviation Weather Services

AC 60-22 Aeronautical Decision Making

AC 60-28 English Language Skills

AC 61-65 Certification of Pilots and Flight Instructors (Endorsements)

AC 61-67 Stall and Spin Awareness Training

AC 61-84 Role of Pre-Flight Preparation

AC 61-107 Operations of Aircraft at Altitude Above 25,000 Feet MSL and/or Mach Greater Than .75

AC 68-1 Alternative Pilot Physical Exams (Basic Med)

AC 90-48 Pilot’s Role in Collision Avoidance

AC 90-66 Non-Towered Airport Flight operations

AC 91-73 Taxi Operations

AC 91-78 Electronic Flight Bags

AC 91-92 Pilot’s Guide to a Preflight Briefing

FAA-H-8083-1B Aircraft Weight & Balance Handbook

FAA-H-8083-2A Risk Management Handbook

FAA-H-8083-3C Airplane Flying Handbook

FAA-H-8083-9B Aviation Instructor’s Handbook

FAA-S-ACS-7B Commercial Pilot ACS

FAA-S-ACS-6C Private Pilot ACS

FAA-H-8083-15B Instrument Flying Handbook

FAA-H-8083-25C Pilot’s Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge

AIM Aeronautical Information Manual

AFD Chart Supplement

NOTAMS [https://notams.aim.faa.gov/notamSearch/nsapp.html#/](https://notams.aim.faa.gov/notamSearch/nsapp.html%23/) (NOTAM site with plain English options)

POH/AFM Pilot Operating Handbooks and FAA Approved Airplane Flight Manuals

POHs and manuals for my planes are available at [www.takeflightsandiego.com/resources](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cdave%5CDownloads%5Cwww.takeflightsandiego.com%5Cresources)

CFI Program Daily Schedule

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 |
| Ground | **I FOI**A Human BehaviorB Learning ProcessC Course Dev & TeachingD Student EvaluationE Effective TeachingF Elements of Teaching (Risk Management) | **II TECHNICAL AREAS**A Human FactorsB Visual ScanningC Runway IncursionD Principles of FlightE Flight Controls | F PerformanceG AirspaceH Nav Systems/RadarH Night OperationsI Nav & X-C Planning | J 14 CFR & PublicationsK EndorsementsM Night OperationsN High Alt Ops (O2)O High Alt Ops (Pressure) | **VI AIRPORT OPERATIONS**A Com Light SignalsB Traffic Patterns**III PREFLIGHT PREPARATION**A Pilot QualificationsB AirworthinessC Weather |
| Flight | **V PREFLIGHT PROCEDURES**A Preflight AssessmentB Flight Deck ManagementC Engine StartingD Taxiing Signs LightingF Before Takeoff Check**VIII FUNDAMENTALS OF FLIGHT**A Straight & LevelB Level TurnsC Climbs/ Climbing TurnsD Descents/Descend Turns | **X SLOW FLIGHT STALLS, & SPINS**A Slow FlightB Slow FlightC Power Off StallsD Power On StallsE Accelerated StallsF X-Control StallsG Elevator Trim StallsH Secondary StallsI Spins Awareness | **XI BASIC INSTRUMENT MANEUVERS**A Straight & Level FlightB Constant A/S ClimbsC Constant A/S DescentsD Turns to HeadingsE Unusual Attitude Recovery**IX PERFORMANCE & GROUND REFERENCE MANEUVERS**A Steep TurnsB Steep SpiralsC ChandellesD Lazy EightsE Ground Ref ManeuversF Eights on Pylons | **XII EMERGENCY OPERATIONS**A Emergency DescentB Emerg App & LandingC Systems & Equip MalD Emerg Equip & Gear | **VII TAKEOFFS, LANDINGS & GO-AROUNDS**A Normal & X-W T.O.B Normal & X-W LandingC Soft Field T.O.D Soft Field LandingM Slips to LandingN Go-AroundO Power Off 180**XIV POSTFLIGHT PROCEDURES**A After Landing |

 NOTE: Area of Operation IV Maneuver Lesson to be Performed in Flight – will be practiced each day according to the lessons presented