

More things people ask.

Q) I failed my checkride and I am really discouraged. Have you ever failed a checkride?

A) *Yes, I have failed several and I was really bummed out each time. I take a checkride every year in the Citation, and one with the FAA for my examining privileges, so I understand the stress involved for the applicant. We all hate to fail. I try to get people who are in this position to understand that they would be a lot more discouraged if down the road they bent an airplane, or injured themselves or a loved one. The examining process is not perfect and neither am I. But if I follow the PTS and use good judgment, I might be able to catch a deficiency before it becomes a factor in an accident or incident. I want everybody to pass but occasionally we run into something that needs fixin before that can happen. I hope that in the cold light of day we are all able to understand that this process protects us all.*

Q) What is the single most important element on the private pilot checkride?

A) *In my opinion, it would be flying the airplane while looking out the window. Too often we can get wrapped up in instrument references, and we forget to use the horizon to see what our pitch and bank attitude is. Very important to be able to multi-task and switch at will from outside to inside references and vice versa.*

Q) Do you like giving checkrides?

A) *There is nothing more satisfying than handing a pilot certificate to an applicant who has done a fine job on the test. On the other hand when we have had problems on the checkride, it can be a painful experience for the applicant, and examiners feel the pain as well. Yes I do like giving checkrides or I wouldn't do it. I like being involved with this part of aviation. It is really the most magical part of the process, learning and discovering new skills and abilities, and always learning more about ourselves. It is great to be involved with people who are reaching for new horizons and taking this momentous step.*



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Charles McDougal

Should you take your FAA Checkride with a guy who flies around in a weird little airplane like this?



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How to choose an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner (without really trying)

This is the best picture of myself that I could find without breaking out the baby pictures. Actually I don't own a hat like this but I was in Switzerland with my wife Madeleine and....well it's a long story. You don't want to pick your DPE (designated pilot examiner) based on looks anyhow, so I guess this picture is good enough.



A little more about me:

A professional musician for about 20 years, I finally figured out that even though I was a pretty good guitar player, I wasn't about to get a record deal. I decided to try something else and I learned how to fly when I was about 40.



Because I was poor as hell when I started working as a flight instructor, I did it a lot, fooling my boss into thinking that I had some

kind of talent for it. He promoted me, much to the chagrin of my contemporaries, and eventually the FAA saw fit to make me a pilot examiner. Actually I was pretty good at instructing and I made a lot of friends doing it. I found examining to be a lot harder, the challenge being not to make too many enemies while still doing the right thing for the FAA. The right thing of course is making sure that the folks I fly with are safe pilots so they don't go out and hurt themselves. Oh yeah, there is also this pesky thing called the Practical Test Standard, (PTS for short) and we all have to fly in accordance with that too.

Me and My PTS

Actually I didn't write the PTS that I test with, The FAA writes a PTS for each Practical Test, as it is properly called, so that we all know what to do on the checkride. It is full of all sorts of interesting stuff, including a list of all the tasks and maneuvers that we have to accomplish satisfactorily in order to earn that new pilot certificate or rating. The things we do on the test are usually connected somehow to the things we do in every day flying. There may be a few items that seem less relevant however, (like a chandelle or turns around a point) but we do em anyway, because we have to... if it's going to be a legal and proper test, which is of course what we all want.

Am I a tough examiner?

I don't think so, but you may find one or two people who do. I try to give each applicant every chance I can to demonstrate pilot proficiency while maintaining safety of flight throughout the test. I start each test with a 100% positive attitude, and I advise the applicant to do the same. I want every applicant to pass, and I try to reflect that hope in my attitude and demeanor. When I am forced to call a test unsatisfactory, it is because I am convinced that there is a deficiency that caused the error. It is sometimes common for the applicant or instructor to focus on the error itself, but I try to provide guidance on how to correct the deficiency that caused the error. We all make mistakes, but deficiencies in skill and knowledge create dangerous situations for pilots and those with whom they share the skies, and these must be corrected before the pilot certificate is issued.

Does each maneuver have to be perfect?

Many are surprised to learn that you don't have to fly perfectly on a checkride. Heck no! It's kind of like driving a car, you just have to stay between the yellow lines and away from the ditch! Hope I don't get in trouble with the FAA for my colorful use of metaphor, but I think it's a good analogy. It is a good idea to read the text in the front of the PTS in addition to the individual tasks. There is much information in this portion of the document that helps us to understand the testing process. Feel free to call me or email me with any questions before the test.

Do you conduct checkrides every day?

Actually no. I used to be a full time instructor and a part time examiner. I really like to fly, and being an examiner you never get to. As examiners we are not allowed to instruct our applicants, and for most kinds of checkrides, we almost never touch the controls or even talk on the radio. I do like the interaction with people though, and I find being an examiner to be very rewarding on a personal level. To answer the question (finally) I have a job as a corporate pilot flying a Cessna Citation, and I am able to do flight tests around three days per week. I really like the balance between flying the



Citation and doing checkrides, and of course I also fly my "weird little airplane" which is called a Long-EZ, designed by Burt Rutan and built by Joe Lacour.

Between the Citation, the Long-EZ, and

the checkrides, I am up in the air a lot. I think that the varied types of flying I do help me to be a good and fair examiner with an up to date perspective on real world flying, as well as knowledge of the PTS. The San Antonio District stretches from Brownsville to Del Rio, and north as far as Temple. I would be happy to fly to your location for a test anywhere within this district. Feel free to call or email me with any questions about the testing process and please visit my website for more

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