



Instrument Rating

ORAL EXAM GUIDE



JASON BLAIR

ESSENTIAL PREPARATION
FOR THE FAA CHECKRIDE

TWELFTH EDITION

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*Instrument Rating Oral Exam Guide: Essential Preparation for the
FAA Checkride*
Twelfth Edition
by Jason Blair

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About the Author



Jason Blair is an active single-engine and multiengine instructor and an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE) with over 6,000 hours total time, over 3,500 hours of instruction given, and more than 3,500 hours in aircraft as a DPE. In his role as an Examiner, he has issued more than 2,500 pilot certificates. Blair has worked for and continues to work with multiple aviation associations with his work focusing on pilot

training and testing. His experience as a pilot goes back over 30 years, as an instructor spans over 20 years, and includes more than 100 makes and models of aircraft flown. Blair has written and continues to write for multiple aviation publications with a focus on training and safety.

In addition to ASA's Oral Exam Guide series, Blair is also the author of five books in ASA's Aviator's Field Guide series: *Buying an Airplane*, *Owning an Airplane*, *Tailwheel Flying*, *Middle-Altitude Flying*, and *Pilot Career Path*.

Introduction

The *Instrument Rating Oral Exam Guide* is a comprehensive guide designed for private or commercial pilots who are involved in training for the Instrument Rating. This guide was originally designed for use in a 14 CFR Part 141 flight school but quickly became popular with those training under Part 61 not affiliated with an approved school. This book is also helpful for instrument-rated pilots who wish to refresh their knowledge or are preparing for an instrument proficiency check (IPC).

The *Instrument Rating–Airplane Airman Certification Standards* (FAA-S-ACS-8) specify the areas in which knowledge must be demonstrated by the applicant before a Pilot Certificate or Rating can be issued. This guide has been designed to evaluate a pilot's knowledge of these areas and contains questions and answers organized into four main chapters that represent logical divisions of a typical instrument flight. An FAA evaluator may ask questions from any of the subject areas within these divisions, at any time during the practical test, to determine if the applicant has the required knowledge. For some topics, the evaluator will ask the applicant to describe or explain; for other items, the evaluator will assess the applicant's understanding with a scenario that requires appropriately applying and/or correlating knowledge, experience, and information to the circumstances of the given scenario. Chapter 5 of this guide provides examples of scenario-based questions to help you prepare for typical scenarios that the examiner may present as part of your oral exam. Based on intensive debriefings conducted after instrument checkrides, we have provided you with the questions and topics commonly asked along with the information or the appropriate reference necessary for a knowledgeable response.

At the end of this guide are four appendices. Appendix 1 contains the "Applicant's Practical Test Checklist" to be used when making final preparations for the checkride, and Appendix 2 is the "Flight

Instructor—Instrument Airplane Supplement” that provides additional study material for instrument instructor candidates preparing for the add-on to their existing flight instructor ticket, but it is also of potential interest to pilots preparing for the instrument checkride or an IPC. Appendix 3 contains excerpts from the FAA’s “Instrument Proficiency Check Guidance” document and FAA AC 61-98, *Currency Requirements and Guidance for the Flight Review and Instrument Proficiency Check*. These assist an instrument instructor in determining whether a pilot seeking an IPC endorsement has both the knowledge and skills for safe operation in all aspects of instrument flying, and they should also prove very useful to pilots preparing for the instrument checkride or an IPC. Full versions of these FAA documents are available at asa2fly.com. Appendix 4 contains an instrument proficiency check flight record form.

You may supplement this guide with other comprehensive study materials as noted in brackets at the end of each answer; for example: [IR.I.A.K1; FAA-H-8083-25]. The first items provided are ACS codes for the relevant Areas of Operation and Tasks from the *Instrument Rating—Airplane Airman Certification Standards* (FAA-S-ACS-8). Additional references pertaining to the questions can be found in the ACS listed under the Tasks corresponding to the provided ACS codes. The next reference(s) in the brackets are other study materials for which abbreviations and corresponding titles are listed below.

Ensure that you use the latest revision of these references when reviewing for the test. Also, check the ASA website at asa2fly.com for the most recent updates to this book due to changes in FAA procedures and regulations as well as for Reader Resources containing additional relevant information and updates.

14 CFR Part 43	<i>Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance, Rebuilding, and Alteration</i>
14 CFR Part 61	<i>Certification: Pilots, Flight Instructors, and Ground Instructors</i>
14 CFR Part 91	<i>General Operating and Flight Rules</i>
14 CFR Part 93	<i>Special Air Traffic Rules</i>
14 CFR Part 95	<i>IFR Altitudes</i>
14 CFR Part 97	<i>Standard Instrument Procedures</i>
14 CFR Part 142	<i>Training Centers</i>

AC 20-113	<i>Pilot Precautions and Procedures to be Taken in Preventing Aircraft Reciprocating Engine Induction System and Fuel System Icing Problems</i>
AC 61-65	<i>Certification: Pilots and Flight and Ground Instructors</i>
AC 61-67	<i>Stall and Spin Awareness Training</i>
AC 61-98	<i>Currency Requirements and Guidance for the Flight Review and Instrument Proficiency Check</i>
AC 61-134	<i>General Aviation Controlled Flight into Terrain Awareness</i>
AC 61-136	<i>FAA Approval of Aviation Training Devices and Their Use for Training and Experience</i>
AC 68-1	<i>BasicMed</i>
AC 90-100	<i>U.S. Terminal and En Route Area Navigation (RNAV) Operations</i>
AC 90-101	<i>Approval Guidance for Required Navigation Performance (RNP) Procedures with Authorization Required (AR)</i>
AC 90-107	<i>Guidance for Localizer Performance with Vertical Guidance and Localizer Performance without Vertical Guidance Approach Operations in the U.S. National Airspace System</i>
AC 90-114	<i>Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast Operations</i>
AC 91-73	<i>Parts 91 and 135 Single Pilot, Flight School Procedures During Taxi Operations</i>
AC 91-74	<i>Pilot Guide: Flight in Icing Conditions</i>
AC 91-78	<i>Use of Class 1 or Class 2 Electronic Flight Bag (EFB)</i>
AFM	<i>Airplane Flight Manual</i>
AIM	<i>Aeronautical Information Manual</i>
AWC	<i>Aviation Weather Center (aviationweather.gov)</i>
CS	<i>Chart Supplement</i>
FAA Form 7233-4	<i>AIM Appendix 4: FAA Form 7233-4—International Flight Plan</i>
faa.gov	<i>Federal Aviation Administration website</i>

(continued)

FAA-H-8083-2	<i>Risk Management Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-3	<i>Airplane Flying Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-9	<i>Aviation Instructor's Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-15	<i>Instrument Flying Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-16	<i>Instrument Procedures Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-25	<i>Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge</i>
FAA-H-8083-28	<i>Aviation Weather Handbook</i>
FAA-H-8083-30	<i>Aviation Maintenance Technician Handbook—General</i>
FAA-H-8083-31	<i>Aviation Maintenance Technician Handbook—Airframe</i>
FAA-H-8083-32	<i>Aviation Maintenance Technician Handbook—Powerplant</i>
FAA InFO 15012	<i>Logging Instrument Approach Procedures (IAP)</i>
FAA-P-8740-09	<i>Descent to MDA or DH and Beyond</i>
FAA-P-8740-30	<i>How to Obtain a Good Weather Briefing</i>
FAA-P-8740-36	<i>Proficiency and the Private Pilot</i>
FAA-S-8081-9	<i>Flight Instructor Instrument Practical Test Standards for Airplane Rating and Helicopter Rating</i>
FAA-S-ACS-8	<i>Instrument Rating—Airplane Airman Certification Standards</i>
Order 8260.3	<i>United States Standard for Terminal Instrument Procedures (TERPs)</i>
P/CG	<i>Pilot/Controller Glossary (from AIM)</i>
POH	<i>Pilot's operating handbook</i>
TTP	<i>U.S. Terminal Procedures Publication</i>
USRGD	<i>FAA Aeronautical Chart User's Guide</i>

Most of these documents are available on the FAA's website (faa.gov). Additionally, many of the publications are reprinted by ASA (asa2fly.com) and are available from aviation retailers worldwide.

A review of the information and references presented within this guide should provide the necessary preparation for the oral section of an FAA instrument certification or re-certification check.

Preflight

1

SAMPLE

A. Pilot Qualifications

1. What experience requirements must a pilot meet to be eligible for an Instrument Rating in an airplane?

A person who applies for an Instrument–Airplane Rating must have logged the following:

- a. 50 hours of cross-country flight time as PIC, of which 10 hours must have been in an airplane;
- b. 40 hours of actual or simulated instrument time in the Part 61 areas of operation, of which 15 hours must have been received from an authorized instructor who holds an Instrument–Airplane Rating, and the instrument time includes:
 - 3 hours of instrument flight training from an authorized instructor in an airplane that is appropriate to the Instrument–Airplane Rating within 2 calendar months before the date of the practical test;
 - Instrument flight training on cross country flight procedures, including one cross country flight in an airplane with an authorized instructor, that is performed under IFR, when a flight plan has been filed with an ATC facility, and that involves a flight of 250 NM along airways or ATC-directed routing, an instrument approach at each airport, and 3 different kinds of approaches with the use of navigation systems.

Exam Tip: The evaluator may ask you to demonstrate that you're current and eligible to take the practical test. When preparing for your practical test, verify that you have met all experience requirements, that you have a current flight review (if it has been more than 24 calendar months since you last received a Pilot Certificate or Rating), that you have received the required logged ground training, that you have received the required flight training, and that you have all required endorsements from your recommending instructor(s). It is a good idea to make sure that your logbook pages are totaled and that you can identify in the logbook and training records how you can demonstrate compliance with and completion of all required training and experience.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.65]

2. Under what flight operations is a pilot required to be instrument rated?

When operations are conducted:

- Under instrument flight rules (IFR flight plan).
- In weather conditions less than the minimum for VFR flight.
- In Class A airspace.
- Under Special VFR within Class B, Class C, Class D and Class E surface areas between sunset and sunrise.
- When carrying passengers for hire on cross-country flights in excess of 50 nautical miles or at night.

[IR.I.A.K2; 14 CFR 61.3, 61.133, 91.135, 91.157]

3. What currency experience requirements must be met for a pilot to act as PIC of a flight under IFR?

A pilot acting as PIC under instrument flight rules must meet the following requirements:

- Meet the requirements of a flight review.
- To carry passengers, 3 takeoffs and landings within the preceding 90 days in an aircraft of the same category, class, and type, if a type rating is required (landings must be full stop if at night or in a tailwheel).
- Within the 6 calendar months preceding the month of the flight, performed and logged in actual weather conditions or under simulated conditions using a view-limiting device, at least the following tasks in an airplane:
 - [Any]
 - Six instrument approaches.
 - Holding procedures and tasks.
 - Intercepting and tracking courses through the use of navigational electronic systems.

Note: 14 CFR §61.57(c) allows the use of an aircraft and/or a full flight simulator, flight training device, or aviation training device for maintaining instrument experience, subject to certain limitations.

Study Tip: A common way pilots remember this is to use the mnemonic “**6-6-HIT.**” This means a pilot must complete **6** approaches in the previous **6** months including **H**olding,

Intercepting, and Tracking courses. Note that this does not specify any particular approaches to be completed, so a pilot could fly the same approach six times and be “current.” This is a good point that an examiner might highlight and then ask you to discuss the difference between “currency” and “proficiency.”

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.57]

4. Explain the difference between being current and being proficient.

Being *current* means that a pilot has accomplished the minimum FAA regulatory requirements within a specific time period to exercise the privileges of the certificate. It means that the pilot is legal to make a flight, but it does not necessarily mean that the pilot is proficient or competent to make that flight. A *proficient* pilot is capable of conducting a flight with a high degree of competence; proficiency requires that the pilot have a wide range of knowledge and skills. Being proficient is not only about being legal in terms of the regulations, but it is about being smart and safe in terms of pilot experience and competence.

Checkride tip: Be ready to discuss how you will personally manage your proficiency and how that might affect your personal minimums decisions, risk mitigation, and go/no-go decision-making for flights.

[IR.I.A.R1; FAA-H-8083-2, FAA-P-8740-36]

5. May a pilot use a flight simulator to accomplish approaches required to maintain or regain instrument currency?

A pilot may “complete the instrument experience in any combination of an aircraft, full flight simulator, flight training device, or aviation training device” (14 CFR 61.57[c][2]). This allows a pilot to utilize a properly certificated full flight simulator, flight training device, or aviation training device for maintaining instrument currency as long as it represents the category of aircraft for the Instrument Rating privileges the pilot needs to maintain and the tasks required for currency are completed in simulated instrument conditions.

Note: Not all simulators are eligible to meet all requirements for instrument proficiency. Many simulators are certified to be used for maintaining or re-establishing currency but may not be able to be used for all requirements of an instrument proficiency check. If you are using a simulator, be sure it is properly qualified to be used for the intended purposes of your currency efforts.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.57]

6. You have an Instrument Rating in both single-engine and multiengine airplanes. If you meet the instrument recency of experience requirements in a single-engine airplane, are you also instrument current in a multiengine airplane?

The regulation section that details pilot currency relating to instrument proficiency does not require a pilot to fly the approaches in a particular category or class of aircraft with respect to instrument approaches. A pilot need only fly the approaches in any “airplane, powered-lift, helicopter, or airship for maintaining instrument experience.” Any combination of these will keep a pilot current for operations in IFR conditions in any of these aircraft. As such, conducting approaches in a single-engine aircraft would keep a pilot current for instrument flight additionally in a multiengine aircraft.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.57]

7. Must a flight instructor be present if you are planning on using an aviation training device to maintain your IFR currency?

No. A pilot may accomplish the recency of experience requirements in a full flight simulator, flight training device, or aviation training device, provided the device represents the category of aircraft for the Instrument Rating privileges to be maintained and the pilot performs the tasks and iterations in simulated instrument conditions. A logbook or training record must specify the training device, time, and the content. An instructor is not required to be present.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.51, 61.57]

8. Are you required to have an instructor present when you are using time in an FFS, FTD, or ATD to acquire instrument aeronautical experience for a Pilot Certificate or Rating?

No. The FAA considers instrument proficiency to be a “recency of experience” requirement, not a “training” one. The regulation states that “a person may use time in a full flight simulator, flight training device or aviation training device for satisfying instrument recency experience requirements, given that a logbook or training record is maintained to specify the training device, time and content.” The FAA has stated that that “satisfying instrument recency experience requirements in an FFS, FTD or ATD is as beneficial as satisfying the requirements in an aircraft, regardless of whether an instructor is present or not.” This applies if a pilot has not expired in their currency after which an IPC would be required.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.51]

9. If a pilot allows their instrument currency to expire, what can be done to become current again?

A pilot is current for the first 6 months following their instrument checkride or proficiency check. If the pilot has not logged at least 6 approaches (including holding procedures, intercepting/tracking courses through the use of navigation systems) within the preceding 6 months, they are no longer considered current to file and fly under IFR. To become current again, the regulations allow a 6 month period from the month in which the pilot was no longer current during which a pilot may get current by finding an “appropriately rated” safety pilot and completing the number of approaches needed to again re-establish that they have completed 6 approaches within the current or 6 preceding calendar months. This could be done in an aircraft or using an appropriate flight simulator. If the pilot has fallen out of currency for more than 6 months, they can reinstate their currency through the completion of an instrument proficiency check given by an examiner, an authorized instructor, or an FAA-approved person to conduct instrument practical tests.

[IR.I.A.K1; 14 CFR 61.57, 91.109]

Instrument Rating

ORAL EXAM GUIDE



Other Oral Exam Guides
available from ASA:

- Private Pilot
- Commercial Pilot
- Multiengine Rating
- Flight Instructor
- Airline Transport Pilot
- Helicopter Pilot
- Flight Review
- Aircraft Dispatcher
- Aviation Mechanic

ASA's Oral Exam Guide Series is an excellent study tool for students and instructors alike. Arranged in a question-and-answer format, this essential guide lists the questions most likely to be asked by examiners during the practical test and provides succinct, ready responses. FAA references are provided throughout for further study.

This twelfth edition of the *Instrument Rating Oral Exam Guide* aligns with the Airman Certification Standards (ACS), with new and expanded content for the preflight, departure, enroute, and arrival phases of instrument flight as well as scenario-based training. Additional study material for Instrument Instructor (CFII) candidates and guidance for instrument proficiency checks (IPCs) make this book valuable both for instructors and for pilots preparing for an FAA checkride or an IPC.



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