

# Private Pilot License - Check Ride

My Private Pilot License (PPL) Check Ride tips, as student pilot short before my check ride and all major items I have learned upfront for the upcoming examination.

## 1 Pre-Flight Check

- Use and have a **preflight checklist** for your plane, at least the POH “*must*” be used and be in your hands!
- Verify **AROW**: check the Airworthiness papers in plane, check the registration is in plane (and if it matches with plane placard), check that current POH is in plane, POH checklist completed, have the W&B for THIS flight with you (ask the examiner about his/her weight and luggage before the flight prepared)
- Use the **preflight check** list **when walking around the plane** and process it. At least: verify with POH that you have checked everything (show that you are aligned with POH).
- Don't forget to check placards listed on POH, matching with your plane.

## 2 Brief your “passenger”

Imagine, that the check ride examiner is “*your friend*”, “*your real passenger*”!  
Brief your passenger before entering airplane and before the flight.

NEVER assume that the check ride person has any knowledge “*about procedures, rules, how to fly an airplane*” (even she/he might know better as you).

Don't assume she/he will (or could) take over control anytime – if so, you have failed!

### “SAFTETY”

- How to enter the airplane? (e.g. LSA with one person on wing)
- How to use the **S**-afety belt (open and close)
- How to use the **A**-ir vents in plane?
- How to find, use the **F**-ire extinguisher (to help you during any emergency)
- What are potential **E**-mergency procedure and how they would 'look like'
- Tell him/her, when to **T**-alk: what and when we have a 'sterile' cockpit, when can we start to react on the 'passengers' question, ask him/her to help when looking for traffic (what to say to you in case spotting a plane, anytime)
- Do **Y**-ou have any questions?

## 3 Taxi-ing the airplane

- Have the airport diagram with taxi ways on your knee-board – on top”
- Mark the taxi ways to use with a pen!
- Don't be too fast on taxi (a walking speed)

- Consider the wind correction when taxiing, esp. when changing directions
- Watch for surrounding, “*situational awareness*”, e.g. a jet pushing back from a gate (avoid jet blast) or distance to plane in front of you (“*prop blast*”)
- Talk loud, if a taxiway, intersection is “**CLEAR**”
- do NOT use any other checklists during taxiing – **look outside**, have all info on taxi diagram, e.g. if wind direction/strength needed before take-off – do not look down for other checklists or messing up with those!

## 4 Run-up

- Tell, what you are checking and what was completed (e.g. when high RPM set, what are you checking to calm down your “passenger”)
- tell on every checklist that this 'one' was completed:  
“*taxi checklist completed*”, “*engine run-up checklist completed*”
- Use really all the checklists, verify to confirm with order and completeness with it (do not do on memory items on obvious checklists usable)

## 5 Take-off

- Remember, that you have briefed “passenger” about '*sterile cockpit*', keep flying the plane
- watch Vx and Vy, pattern altitude, emergency procedures and landings – **fly as PIC all the time!**
- Don't forget take-off checklists, e.g. “*full pump off*”, “*landing lights off*” - before ENTIRE take-off was really completed – don't let you distract during take-off!

## 6 Cruise flight

- Have always an emergency spot to land on in mind – check also if it might be behind you!
- when talking and answering questions – don't miss any radio call or forget to fly the plane
- keep altitude and heading by visual references – **don't stare at instruments** – we are flying VFR
- look for traffic - always, scan the environment and look outside – don't look at your examiner
- be prepared for '*minor*' “emergency situations” as: *I am feeling ugly*:
  - look outside, to the horizon
  - open air vents (fresh air)
  - put hands on controls (but don't block me flying)
  - drink water, eat something
  - ==> **have a through-up bag handy**
  - land on next A/P possible
  - do smooth flight maneuvers (esp. turns and descent)

## 7 Traffic Pattern

Potentially, you had to fly traffic patterns, even around unknown airports

- bear in mind (FAR/AIM): staying in pattern – cross-wind turn is at Traffic Pattern Altitude (TPA) minus 300ft!
- Even when flying: know what is defined in AIM/FAR

## 8 Emergency Procedures

- Know **all the time where to do an emergency landing**
- do it by 'items memorized' but confirm with checklists (use those, when time after procedure established)
- bear in mind differences:
- **electrical issues: power-cycle**, check circuit breakers, land at appropriate (keep flying plane to) next airport
- **engine issues:** land as soon as possible, esp. engine fire, next emergency spot
  - don't restart engine if engine fire was the issue
  - if engine lost – try to restart – if positive – land the plane as soon as possible)
- establish best glide (L/D), gain altitude if airspeed is higher
- if engine fire dive – convert speed to altitude when establishing best glide (after fire blown out)
- always fly the airplane, watch the airspeed, **pull stick forward** for safe airspeed, convert over-speed to altitude if possible (e.g. to establish glide)
- Don't forget: **7700** on **XPDR** and **121.5** on radio – *these are there for your help*

## 8 Maneuvers

All ground reference maneuvers are with visual references.

- Clearing turn (and maneuver procedures, e.g. 'fuel pump on')
- use visual outside references, e.g. for heading, bank angle)
- Announce, when to start maneuver (heading, altitude)
- If cross-check needed via instruments (bank angle, altitude) - very quickly, but fly visually! Don't stare at instruments during the maneuver!
- Check outside for other traffic when doing the maneuvers – all the time – look outside
- if 'turning around a point' – tell what your pivot point is for the turn
- if 'rectangle course' – make sure to turn when pivot point is 45deg behind wing, have all the time the references visible (distance to, pivot point)
- if 'turning around a point': use wing tip as reference: the wing angle (climb or descent), ahead or behind (too close or away) – use your wing in relation to ground reference, **check for traffic all the time**

- maybe: tell when to steepen bank angle or to shallow, due to wind
- be aware where the wind is coming from, where to enter with downwind!  
Check for cues on ground (smoke, cloud movement, plane movement, GPS) to know where the wind is coming from

## 9 In-flight emergency questions

- Know the effect of icing
- how to realize icing (wing, engine)?
- What to do (Carburetor Heat, Pitot Heat, Wing Deicing) – what does it mean to fly plane in this condition (airspeed, stall speed ...)
- How to deal with engine lost on approach?  
*“short final”, “fly towards the number”*
- When do you have a safe pattern altitude, esp. in case of *‘extend the downwind’*?
- When to use and how much flaps (ground wind, engine fail)
- How to do slip on landing, esp. if flaps failed?
- Have memorized all the emergency procedures – but still use checklists during flight!
- It might happen to you to get questions during check flight which might be covered on ground: don't be scared, just think about as you are flying, e.g. *“icing during flight”*:
  - Carb Heat is your first friend!
  - Stall speed and IAS awareness as well – increased!
  - all other, like 'deicing the wing', 'pitot tube heat', 'descent to warmer air' is pretty obvious
  - | – don't be nervous: *fly plane first, be the PIC all the time and make decisions*

## 10 Landings

- Remember, which type of landing was requested to do (short vs. soft)
- **Announce your intended touchdown point - always**
- if not established – do a **go-around**, don't force any landing via *‘dropping it in’*
- do proper actions after touch down, or announce what to do, e.g. *“short field - full brakes”* - simulate and announce properly, if short-field – keep nose up as long as possible, show clearly the actions (e.g. full brakes), even not appropriate for situation (still enough runway left, but examiner gets idea what you would do)
- keep plane on center line
- do proper cross-wind correction – on final, even after touch down – **don't stop flying the plane**
- have already prepared GND frequency but change just after releasing runway
- **STOP and clean the plane** – never mind if already cleared for any further taxi
- taxi diagram, checklist – perform all steps even cleared already for further taxiing!
- If needed to do **go-around** (better to try again) – tell tower and proceed go-around properly

## 11 Other Remarks

### 11.1 “Talking”

- Do not talk too much:
  - answer questions short and briefly – no details or explanations
  - if not known: tell the truth: “*no idea*”, don't make any guess or explanation, thoughts, assumptions
- But talk enough to convince you are the PIC:
  - talk loud which checklist was completed
  - talk loud if a taxi-way crossing is clear
  - talk loud when doing a decision (e.g. '*wake turbulence*', '*landing spot*' is ...')
  - talk loud what would be your next action (e.g. '*I will climbing again*')
  - talk loud about emergency procedures, e.g.. '*if we would lose engine – then I would land there*'
- keep cockpit **sterile** during taxi, take-off, landing etc. - even with a check ride person: *it is your passenger - you are the PIC!*

### 11.2 Runway

- Even not requested to do a 'short field take-off': use always maximum length of runway: have in mind to have runway left in case of aborting take-off
- Keep flying runway heading, proper wind correction (e.g. crab, aileron use on take-off), do not drift away from center line
- look for emergency landings: abort take-off or below 500ft for a straight out emergency landing, when to do the '*impossible turn back*'
- If '*impossible turn back*' able to do: know the wind direction (turn into wind), if a dog leg: how to turn with making advantage of it)
- taxi on center-line, centered, not too fast, all the time
- check for clear taxi-way intersections
- be aware of 'hold-short' or 'hold position' even during taxiing
- know where you are, where and how to go (taxi diagram)
- keep listen to GND/TWR for instructions – refrain from heavy talking with passenger!
- ==> the flight is finished when the plane is parked!

### 11.3 'I failed already'

If you get own impression you failed already (don't watch examiner) or he/she told you, you missed or failed already on one item – **DON'T stop flying the plane and to act as PIC!**

Forget the mistake, don't think backwards, be focused on still coming items, fly still ahead your plane!

Even you failed already, all the coming checks count: if you passed those – you had to re-do only the

failed items. **Don't give up, keep flying**, all further passed items are counting for you.

You can 'stop' and request 'to finish the flight' but then you had to demonstrate all the skipped items on next check-ride again. If you keep flying, even knowing you failed already, all the further properly done maneuvers and checks count already, for you.

**Do NOT give up flying on check-ride, even it looks odd already!**

## Summary

1. *Forget the examiner*: he/she is a friend, he/she is a regular passenger (on a solo flight)
2. **You are the PIC!** :brief your passenger but think about like flying a family member, a friend
3. **Never give up!** Keep flying the plane even something went not so well, think about your Solo's where you could not stop flying the plane
4. Make the flight pleasant to your 'passenger' as you would do with a friend or family member: brief him/her, create an enjoyable flight, respond to questions as a professional PIC
5. Talk to yourself to illustrate '*all on under my control, all nominal, 'I know what I am doing'*', but DON'T talk too much, e.g. about your uncertainties, weaknesses or guesses. **Fly the plane as PIC!**
6. Stay calm, professional as on your solo flights: the examiner on your side does not want to trick and does not want to fail you: she/he wants to see, you are the PIC, all times during the flight.
7. Don't think about it is a check-ride: fly the plane, be the PIC, keep you and passenger (examiner) safe during entire flight and bring him/her safe back to ground.  
You are checked for your “**PIC capabilities**” on all times and potential conditions during flight, not for any mistake you could be trapped in.
8. Don't think, when failed, you are foolish: any mistake should help you, to improve, to handle better next time: **every bad experience is a step towards to do it better**, next time and for the rest of your life. Nobody is perfect and we all learn from the bad things. We get better by strengthen our strength and reduce our weaknesses, with help to realize those. We need a feedback from other people to realize where are the improvements hooks for us.  
So, the check-ride examiner is there for your benefits, to make you a safe, safer and even more proficient pilot, not with the intention in mind to tell you: '*you are not made for*'.
9. Pilots have to learn every minute of flight and so the check-ride is one of such opportunity. It is not there in place to fool you, to let you fail: it is there to let you learn and make it better (for your and and your passengers safety).