

PAVING THE WAY TO A SUCCESSFUL CHECKRIDE

Let's PAVE a road, if you will. One that will bring about success on the big day. If you haven't heard of the FAA's "PAVE" checklist, then maybe you aren't ready for checkride day. So make sure you read up and have a clear understanding.

PAVE can be found in numerous locations, primarily in the FAA's "Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge." The PAVE checklist provides a means to identify hazards using four convenient hazard "buckets." Using all four checklist categories or "buckets" before a flight captures most hazards that are usually encountered. Safe flight is about mitigating risks, and a successful checkride is no different. This is where you can use the PAVE checklist to help.

PAVE is an acronym that stands for Pilot, Aircraft, enVironment, and External factors. Even a non-aviator can see how these four factors relate to safe and successful outcomes, but let's take a deeper dive into how this checklist can help with your practical exam.

The *Pilot*: That's you! Are you truly prepared for the practical exam? Oftentimes, a reckoning of truth is needed here. On numerous occasions, I have seen applicants end up with a less-than-desirable outcome just because they wanted to "give it a shot" despite being bogged down with other issues such as school finals, death of a pet, job loss, car trouble, etc.

Sure, stress on checkride day is normal, but be honest with yourself if something prevents you from performing at optimal capability. It is your day, and you walk in the door as a "pass." It is up to you to keep that status!

You will undoubtedly be asked about the "IMSAFE" checklist during your exam, which also holds a lot of merit for checkride day. If you don't meet the requirements of that acronym for any reason, show good aeronautical decision-making and tell your designated pilot evaluator that you have to postpone.

Aircraft is next on the checklist. This goes without saying, but show up at your exam with an airworthy helicopter. Are all of the required inspections up to date on the aircraft? Are they labeled correctly so you can find them efficiently? Remember, there are no "phone a friend" options here!

What about aircraft documents? Are they correct for the aircraft? Nothing is more embarrassing to an applicant (and aircraft owner) than when an examiner arrives for a practical test only to find the aircraft registration is expired or has been mismatched with another fleet aircraft.

Next up is the *enVironment*. Have you visited the location where you will do your exam? Sometimes the exam happens at your "home" airport, but applicants often find themselves visiting an entirely new environment. Make a point to fly in and out of the airport with your instructor to ease your nerves. If you are required to fly through a Class B, C, or D airspace to get to your evaluator, that says a lot.

I've seen applicants avoid relatively mild airspace just because of mic fright. This too says a lot about not only the applicant, but also the applicant's instructor. You are coming to a practical exam to be certified to fly in the entire NAS, not just class G and E airspaces. Be prepared.

Another factor with the environment is the weather; start looking seven days out at the weather, with close attention to the 48-24 hour timeframe before your scheduled practical exam. If the weather is "so-so" and is causing you stress, it's probably best to reschedule.

Last up is *External* factors, and this one is huge. Self-induced pressure has resulted in more than a few notices of disapproval in my tenure as an evaluator. Applicants got "in their head" and couldn't get out, sometimes even resulting in discontinuances due to illness. Remember, it is your day! You don't necessarily have to inform the world on social media that you are headed to your checkride. Why put that unnecessary pressure on yourself?

Let's face it: flying is not possible without risk. That is why we push pilots of all levels to learn mitigation strategies from the very onset of their training. The same goes for practical exams. When it comes to proper planning for the event, use PAVE.

For a successful outcome, you must take yourself (as the Pilot), the Aircraft, the enVironment, and external factors into total consideration. By the way, that is what we all three (you, your instructor and the DPE) want to see: a successful outcome!



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