



## FAA Practical Test Standard Updates

Tony Condon

Effective May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 the FAA has made updates to all of their testing documents. This includes the Private, Commercial, and CFI Glider Practical Test Standards. There should be no significant changes that you need to implement in your training or expect on your upcoming practical tests. As always you should make sure to prepare for your test and train your students to the latest versions.

While the changes are mostly clerical, let's examine what has been updated for each of the PTS's that we deal with.

The Private Pilot Glider PTS was last refreshed in April 1999 with a clarifying update in 2010 regarding Abnormal Occurrences and Normal Landings. The Commercial PTS was dated November 2006 with a parallel update in 2010 and an additional change in 2014. The CFI PTS was dated October 2006 and has seen no changes since. These documents are due for a new look.

Let's start with changes that are exclusive to the Private PTS. There is no longer a paragraph in the Introduction emphasizing the "Special Emphasis Areas" of Stall/Spin Awareness, Wake Turbulence Avoidance, Low-Level Wind Shear, Collision Avoidance, Runway Incursion Avoidance, and Checklist Usage. Of course, you still need to prepare your student and be able to perform these items. These are integral to many of the PTS Tasks. A paragraph has also been added to clarify that if a Task is incomplete or uncertain, the evaluator may ask for it to be repeated. However, the evaluator cannot provide instruction, practice, or allow an unsatisfactory task to be repeated. An additional paragraph has been added describing the third possible outcome of a Letter of Discontinuance. The new Private PTS make it clear that the evaluator "must incorporate one or more scenarios" into the test. Not only that but they should incorporate as many tasks as possible into the scenarios. We want to see application of knowledge and skill, not just rote memorization. The Metric Conversion Initiative has been removed.

Many changes are common to all of the Glider PTS's. Website references have been incorporated and updated, including an email address for comments. The list of references has been updated to reflect the move towards FAA Handbooks. The Glider Flying Handbook, Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge, and the Aviation Weather Handbook have essentially replaced old Advisory Circulars. Additionally, the old Soaring Flight Manual, which is no longer in print, is no longer referenced. A list of Abbreviations and Acronyms has been included.

The Practical Test Prerequisites and Aircraft Required for the Practical Test sections now simply refer us to the appropriate regulations instead of reprinting them in the PTS. Several paragraphs have been added clarifying the Evaluators responsibility to assess the English Language skills of the applicant. The section describing Satisfactory Performance now refers to the defining regulation, FAR 61.43(a).

The Crew Resource Management paragraph has been expanded to include Aeronautical Decision Making, Risk Management, and Safety Risk Management. It is made clear that the evaluator will use a scenario combining Tasks to evaluate the ability of each applicant to asses and manage risks and make good decisions.





Applicants are still expected to use Checklists, overcome Distractions, and use Positive Exchange of Flight Controls. There is no significant change to the Applicants and Evaluators Checklist or the table for additional ratings.

In the Private and CFI PTS's, an additional paragraph has been added describing the third possible outcome of a Letter of Discontinuance.

Now we've made it to the actual Tasks on the test. Good news there are only minor additions! First, all applicants can expect to be tested on Visual Illusions as part of the Aeromedical Factor. Private and Commercial applicants are now expected to have knowledge of standard weather briefings and soaring forecasts as well as Airport Diagrams including Hot Spots.

For the CFI PTS, Safety Considerations have been added as part of the task Objectives. For CFIs testing in Self Launching Gliders, the Engine Shutdown In Flight and Engine Restart in Flight are noted (if applicable).

As you can see, the updates to the PTS's are primarily updating the introductions to match policy and emphasis changes that have taken place in the last 20-25 years since these documents were last changed.

