

Written Examination

Changes

As of July 2014 the FAA Aeronautical Knowledge Test Questions and public questions have changed.

The changes

When you walk in to take your next pilot knowledge test, you're going to notice two changes that were implemented by the FAA in July.

The **first** difference is that the answer choices for each question will be shuffled-what was answer choice A in the test prep books might be answer choice C on your test. This change is aimed at eliminating the possibility of using simple memorization tactics that associate letters with questions. For example, there's a private pilot cross-country flight planning question that starts at Addison Airport. The answer to the question has traditionally been letter A-A for Addison. No E6B flight computer needed for that one!

The **second** (and more striking) difference concerns the "math" type questions: those that ask you to perform flight-planning, performance, or weight-and-balance calculations. The FAA now will only release one or two examples of each type of question that can appear on the test. For example, consider a flight-planning question that requires you to use a sectional chart to perform a time en route calculation between two airports. Your test will contain a question of this type, but one that will require you to perform the same calculation using different airports on a different sectional chart. If you know how to do the calculation, rest assured-you won't have any problem answering the new questions. You just won't have the opportunity to see the questions in advance.

So how should we study?

So what does all this mean for pilots (like me) who are preparing for an upcoming knowledge test? For now, it probably means we're going to have to work a few extra flight-planning, performance, and weight-and-balance problems. A little extra effort here should nicely prepare us to put our skills to work regardless of which charts the FAA decides to slide under our noses come test day.

Start with the FAA questions, and swap in some different numbers. For weight and-balance-problems, try moving passengers around in the airplane, add some more fuel or baggage, and then crunch the numbers to see what you get. Dig up a pilot's operating handbook for some other airplanes. Review the sections on flight planning, performance, and weight and balance in other textbooks or test-prep products written for your certificate or rating. Good ones will include problems at the end of each chapter for you to get some practice. Textbook authors should step forward and meet the demand for extra questions for student practice.

Even though the FAA will, for the time being, continue to release the non-math questions, start fortifying your understanding of these aeronautical topics, too. Reading other textbooks and reviewing other computer-based courses is one good way to get different perspectives. Talking to fellow pilots is another. Perhaps the best exercise is to look for ways to relate what you are learning in the books to what you see and do when you fly. Martin Weaver at the FAA emphasizes this point: "Rote memorization is only the first step. The goal is to be able to apply what you know and to relate it to other things you know." I remember once watching my flight instructor colleague, Homi Irani, staring at a fan sitting on the floor of our flight school. After a few minutes, he walked over and picked it up with one finger, by the handle on the top of the running fan. He then poked the side of the fan with his other finger and watched the fan pitch up. He looked over and uttered two words: "Gyroscopic precession." Yeah!

How can CFIs make sure that their students are learning the right stuff? One idea comes from veteran flight instructor Howard Fried, who explains how he gives students his own, more difficult knowledge test before signing them off to take the FAA test. "Only those who scored 80 percent or better on our final were...allowed to take the FAA test." Fried adds that when the student knows the material, the exam takes care of itself.

Want to know more?

The following resources offer additional information on topics

- Review airman knowledge test guides and test questions at AOPA Online.
- Review the FAA's knowledge test standards and test banks
http://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/test_questions/
- Find a testing center; download a coupon for a \$10 AOPA member discount at any CATS location

PREPARATION FOR THE FAA SPORT PRIVATE PILOT KNOWLEDGE EXAMINATION

LAST MAN/WOMAN STANDING EXERCISE

1. REVIEW YOUR FAA KNOWLEDGE TEST BOOKLET
2. THE BEGINNING OF EACH SECTION DETAILS “WHAT IS IMPORTANT” ON YOUR KNOWLEDGE EXAM. REVIEW IT.
3. HIGHLIGHT THE CORRECT ANSWER FOR EVERY QUESTION.
4. Practice on Exam4Pilots.com. Get several trials of 60 questions at 80% or greater !
5. IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ANSWER TO ANY QUESTION, WE WILL REVIEW AND DISCUSS IN THIS WRAP UP CLASS.
6. PRIOR TO THE EXAMINATION READ QUESTION AND HIGHLIGHTED ANSWER. DO THIS TWICE, THEN GO TAKE THE TEST !!!

NEXT CLASS IS FINAL EXAM TO QUALIFY FOR ENDORSEMENT TO TAKE THE “REAL” TEST.