

IFR Checkride Notes

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I recently took the Instrument Rating Airplane Exam with DPE B. It was both a great learning experience and a great day. Preparing for the ride is definitely stressful, so I hope this account of my checkride will help you get a better perspective of what to expect.

First Steps (8:00)

- I didn't arrive early enough, and had to scramble a little when I found the oil cap was overtightened by the previous renter. Be sure to arrive early enough to make the whole process a lot less stressful.
- Got airframe and engine logbooks from the cabinets near the headsets
- Short preflight before Line Tech brought the plane over to DPE's office.

Paperwork / Random (8:30)

- First thing DPE did was check over my Private license, IACRA Application #, and made sure I understood the pilot's bill of rights.
- Bring all of the necessary documents and keep them in a folder, just makes these tedious first steps a lot easier!

Oral Exam (~9:00)

- Started with Airframe / Engine Logs
 - Went through required inspections and proved that aircraft was airworthy and legal for IFR operations.
 - Also went over Weight / Balance and Performance Characteristics
- We briefly went over ICAO Filing codes, which I missed. Just make sure to know what you are filing under and why!

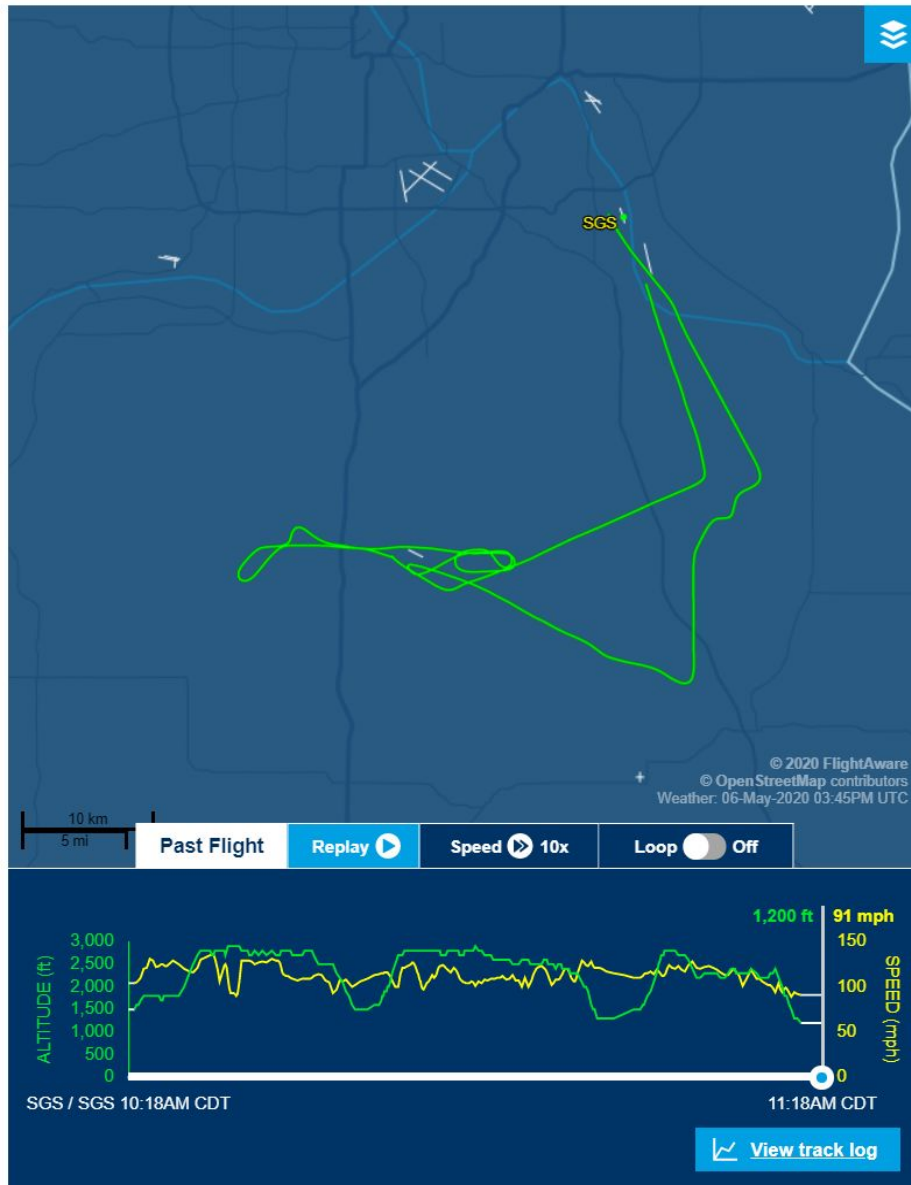
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- Briefly discussed my own personal minimums
 - Went over Flight Plan - Our flight was to Des Moines (KDSM) so I printed out a little flight planning sheet with Skyvector. I just planned with a couple of VOR's along the way. Make sure you can explain why you choose the route that you did - "**Why not just direct?**". I just chose a couple of VOR's along the path with the Victor routes for redundancy since we have the Garmin 430 along with the King COM2/NAV2.
 - This is a great time to show you know the regulations for the IFR flight planning, by justifying the choices you made like:
 - Alternates?
 - Route?
 - Altitude?
 - Fuel?
 - Most of the Weather portion was covered in the [briefing](#) that I prepared for the planned flight to DSM.
 - Also asked questions about how to interpret info from Aviation Weather Service website.
 - Equipment Failure / Use
 - What do we do in icing?
 - Pitot Probe Blocked - Effects / Course of Action
 - Static Probe Blocked - Effects / Course of Action
 - Vacuum Pump Failure - Effects / Course of Action
 - Electric / Gyro Failure - Effects / Course of Action
 - Couple of different lost comms situations, "**What would you do?**"
 - After this, we moved onto chart comprehension. I was pretty tripped up with a couple of the symbols, so it could be really helpful to pull out an actual chart so you can use the legend. Right after we did the same for the approach charts.
 - Couple of different lost comms situations, "What would you do?"
 - I honestly don't remember what we exactly covered, but I'm pretty sure it followed pages 1-10 of the instrument rating [airmen certification standards](#). I didn't use this, but looking back it would have been a great reference to study with. I'd really recommend using this to practice your knowledge skills and find what you need to improve on. Just be sure that you can demonstrate your knowledge meets the standards!
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Practical Exam (~10:00)

- DPE gave me notice of our flight plan - He would act as ATC for the first little bit of the planned flight to DSM, and give us Vectors while talking to approach.
- Gave a quick passenger brief after the preflight, and taxied to the runup area.
 - Make sure to use the checklists as much as you can! Generally a good practice but a **GREAT** practice for any checkride.
- At the runup pad, I ran through the runup / final checklists and entered the flight plan into the G430 as well as loading the next frequencies into standby. Here I made a pretty dumb move and almost left to take off when he asked if I had forgotten anything. Since he was acting as ATC, **I had forgotten to call Clearance Delivery to activate the flight plan.** I just wrote the clearance down in Foreflight, but he cleared me as filed except Direct LDASH, Direct FGT, and then as filed. I just had to enter the extra waypoint into the flight plan in the 430, so that wasn't terrible.
- The flight was about 1.5 hours, and covered a lot of different things.
 - First we departed KSGS and flew Direct LDASH, then on Course to FGT. On course to FGT DPE directed to on course direct to MCW and asked for an updated ETA. After this, we went through unusual maneuvers before intercepting the LVN Localizer inbound on vectors to final from MSP approach. We flew this approach to minimums, then went missed and flew the published missed into the hold at the FGT VOR. After two or three circuits DPE instructed me to exit the hold and set up for the VOR 12 Approach. **I messed up here and waited too long to activate the approach, and almost activated it AFTER passing the FGT VOR on the outbound leg.** We flew that approach with the procedure turn and circled to land on 30 for a touch and go. After this we flew eastbound to fly the RNAV 34 approach for KSGS. **This time DPE covered up both the attitude indicator AND the G5.** I had flown partial panel before with only the attitude indicator out, so be sure to know how to guide yourself on an approach with the 430 and peripheral instruments only. After this we just taxied in and he told me that I was within limits for qualification and that my application was approved!

Flight Summary

- **3 Approaches (ILS 30 LVN, VOR 12 LVN, RNAV 34 SGS)**
 - For ILS we went missed and held at FGT, VOR 12 with procedure turn, then circle to land for 30, and RNAV was straight in for 34 with partial panel
 - Brain told me to use either GPS or the VOR for the hold, I used GPS.
 - I used the acronym W-MIDGT about a mile before each FAF.
 - **Weather, Minimums, ID, GUMPS, Transmi**
 - I flew in N9341C, which has a wing leveler. I used this for most of the flight, and it helped to decrease workload and made the track look pretty clean!



Resources

- **Garmin 430 Sim:**
 - The Garmin 430 is a great piece of tech! **Knowing how to use this and use it well can make or break the checkride**, and there were a couple of times where it nearly broke mine. Spend some time messing around in here, screwing up your flight plan and figuring out how to fix it. There's a lot you can get out of getting to know this software. I know this works great on PC, but I don't know about mac or linux. Get the G430 Sim for free [here!](#)

- **Pilot Cafe IFR Quick Review:**
 - "Quick" Review that puts a lot of the most important information for IFR Flying into a great format! I printed this off at the start of my training and it helped me get a much better idea of how all of the different regulations and rules all played into each other. I wasn't able to do this, but if you have some extra time making **your own** quick review sheet would be super helpful!
 - Not my own work at all, but download and print it from [here!](#)

- **ICAO Filing Codes**
 - Missed this on the Oral so DPE sent me [this](#) when we finished. Helpful review in general!

- **Airmen Certification Standards**
 - I wish that I had studied with [this!](#) Looking back, this is a great guide for what you can expect to demonstrate both during the oral and the practical exam.

Disclaimer - This is just **my** experience with the Instrument Checkride, your experience will vary! I hope that this gives you a little better idea what the Instrument Checkride with DPE . **might** be like. The best advice I can give you is to have some good food before you fly, and try hard to enjoy it - you get to go flying!