

Checklist

Aeronautical Proficiency Checkups

Though we all gripe about congested airspace and increased security requirements, the truth is that general aviation pilots in this country enjoy an amazing level of flexibility and freedom. Airline, corporate, and military flight operations are all strictly regulated, and each uses a significant degree of internal oversight to ensure compliance.

GA has relatively few of these regulatory encumbrances. As a result, safety depends heavily upon the development and maintenance of each individual pilot's basic skills, systems knowledge, and aeronautical decision-making skills. The ability to maintain our freedom depends on maintaining the proficiency necessary to ensure the safety of our passengers, the public, and ourselves.

Though many pilots regard them as “tests” to be dreaded and survived, the flight review required in 14 CFR section 61.56 and the instrument proficiency check (IPC) required in 14 CFR section 61.57 are both intended to be proficiency checkups for the pilot.

Flight Review Guidance

The flight review provides a regular opportunity to focus on improving your knowledge and skills. It also offers pilots the opportunity to design a personal currency and proficiency program in consultation with a certificated flight instructor (CFI). In effect, the flight review is the aeronautical equivalent of a regular medical checkup and ongoing health-improvement program.

To better accomplish these objectives, the FAA worked with industry to develop an optional guide for conducting an effective flight review. The guide provides tools for helping pilots develop a personalized currency, proficiency, risk management, and “aeronautical health maintenance and improvement” program. A key part of this process is developing risk-management strategies and realistic personal minimums.

Instrument Proficiency Check Guidance

Similarly, FAA worked with industry to develop an optional online guide to conducting the IPC. To ensure the IPC serves its intended purpose, the Practical Test Standards (PTS) for the instrument rating (FAA-S-8081-4E) stipulates that the flight portion of an IPC must include certain aeronautical tasks specific to instrument flying. The online IPC guide offers additional guidance with special emphasis on ground review and on IPCs in aircraft with advanced avionics. The goal is to help the CFI-I determine that a pilot seeking an IPC endorsement has both the knowledge and skills for safe operation in all aspects of instrument flying.

Check Out the Checkups

While intended primarily to assist flight instructors, both the flight review and IPC guidance documents are available to anyone who wants to know what to expect and how to maximize the opportunity to learn. Each includes handouts and worksheets.

You might also consider taking the online flight review prep and/or IPC prep courses available through the online course catalog at www.faa.gov. Both are designed to be consistent with the online flight review and IPC guides. They also provide a structured review of the regulations and procedures that a proficient pilot should know.

Susan Parson (susan.parson@faa.gov) is a Special Assistant in the FAA's Flight Standards Service. She is an active general aviation pilot and flight instructor.

For More Information

Conducting an Effective Flight Review – Appendix 8, Personal Proficiency Practice Plan

www.faa.gov/pilots/training/media/flight_review.pdf

Instrument Proficiency Check (IPC) Guidance

www.faa.gov/pilots/training/media/IPC_Guidance.pdf

Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9A)

www.faa.gov/library/manuals/aviation/aviation_instructors_handbook/media/FAA-H-8083-9A.pdf