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FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR INSTRUMENT · AIRPLANE

Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII) Study Guide

How to teach instrument flying, and what the evaluator expects on the PTS

Organized by the Flight Instructor Instrument Practical Test Standards (FAA-S-8081-9E, effective May 31, 2024). This is a PTS, not an ACS, and it was the current airplane CFII standard when this edition was published. Confirm the current standard before testing. Multiengine Tasks apply only if you furnish a multiengine airplane.

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This free sample is from the CFII Study Guide: Fundamentals of Instructing, human behavior and effective communication: Maslow's hierarchy, defense mechanisms, and levels of learning, applied to real instrument lessons. Free to share in this form. Independent study material, not an FAA publication, and not a substitute for your POH/AFM or flight instruction. Always verify against current FAA sources.

Area I: Fundamentals of Instructing

> The PTS requires the evaluator to choose at least Tasks E, F, and G, and one other. The questions are about teaching in general, but they are answered best with **instrument examples**: how a student learns a scan, how you critique an approach, how you write an instrument lesson plan. The Task list matches the Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9).

CFII.I.B Human Behavior and Effective Communication

References: FAA-H-8083-9.

Objective: *To determine that the applicant exhibits instructional knowledge of the elements of human behavior and effective communication as it applies to the teaching/learning process by describing:*

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS LOOKING FOR

That you can explain human behavior (needs, defense mechanisms, the instructor as a practical psychologist) and effective communication (elements, barriers, skills).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Human needs and defense mechanisms.
- The three elements of communication and the barriers.

WHAT YOU MAY RUN INTO

- "A student blames the airplane for a poor approach. What is happening?"

COMMON MISTAKES

- Naming mechanisms without relating them to a lesson.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Prepare a short scenario for each defense mechanism.

Your airplane: None. This is general instructor knowledge.

Human Behavior and Effective Communication: What to Know, Why, and How to Teach It

What the PTS is asking, and why

The instrument student is under stress: the clouds, the hood, the radio, and the fear of failing. The PTS asks whether you understand why students behave as they do, and whether you can communicate so that they can learn.

1. Control of human behavior

People change their behavior when they understand why, when they feel safe, and when they see a benefit. Behavior cannot be forced. An instructor controls behavior mostly by setting expectations, giving clear feedback, and remaining calm.

2. Human needs

The most-cited model is Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physical, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. A student who is hungry, tired, or afraid cannot focus on learning. In practice:

- **Physical and safety needs come first:** a hungry or cold student, or one who feels unsafe because of the instructor's behavior, cannot learn.
- **Social and esteem needs:** students want respect. A humiliating critique damages learning.
- **Self-actualization:** the student's goal, the rating or the skill.

3. Defense mechanisms

When a student feels threatened, he or she may protect their ego with a defense mechanism. Know the common ones and how they look in an instrument lesson:

Mechanism	What it is	How it sounds
Rationalization	Making up an acceptable reason for a failure.	"The turbulence made me bust the altitude."
Projection	Blaming someone or something else.	"The controller gave me a bad clearance."
Denial	Refusing to accept the problem.	"I was on the glideslope the whole time."
Compensation	Making up for a weakness by emphasizing a strength.	A student who is weak on the scan but good at memorizing procedures.
Reaction formation	Behaving opposite to how they feel.	A nervous student who acts overconfident.
Fantasy	Daydreaming to escape.	A student who loses focus when stressed.
Flight or escape	Avoiding the problem.	"I don't need to do partial panel; I'll never lose the vacuum."
Aggression	Striking out.	Anger at the instructor or the airplane.
Resignation	Giving up.	"I will never learn this."

What to do: do not argue. Stay calm, give evidence (a chart, a track, a recording), and ask questions that let the student discover the problem.

4. The instructor as a practical psychologist

You are expected to understand people well enough to teach them: to notice anxiety, overconfidence, fatigue, and frustration, and to adjust the lesson. An anxious student needs a slower pace and more reassurance. An overconfident student needs a demonstration of their limits, safely.

5. Effective communication

- **Basic elements:** a source (you), a symbol (words, gestures, charts), and a receiver (the student). Communication succeeds only if the receiver gets the meaning you intended.
- **Barriers:** lack of common experience (using jargon the student does not know), confusion between the symbol and what it stands for, overuse of abstractions (vague words like "good scan"), and interference (noise, stress, the hood, the headset).
- **Developing skills:** use plain words, concrete examples, feedback (ask "tell me what you will do"), and listening.

6. Teaching it in the instrument airplane

Knowing the definitions is not enough. The evaluator wants to see you use the fundamentals of instructing and your instrument knowledge together, in a real lesson. Here is how each idea shows up under the view-limiting device, and what you do about it.

In the lesson	What is going on	What you do as the instructor
After 30 minutes under the hood the scan falls apart. Altitude wanders and the student stops talking.	Physical needs: fatigue and task saturation. Learning has stopped, even if the lesson has not.	End the hood period or give a break on outside references. Plan 15 to 20 minute hood blocks (Chapter 2) and finish the lesson on the ground.
The student is tense and over-controls on the first unusual attitude recovery.	Safety needs: fear of losing control in cloud.	Brief the recovery on the ground, demonstrate it first, and start with mild attitudes. Show that a trimmed airplane holds attitude on its own.
After a botched hold entry with another pilot riding along, the student goes quiet.	Social and esteem needs: embarrassment in front of a peer.	Critique privately and later. Start with what went right, then give one specific fix and one more attempt.
"The localizer is too sensitive. That is why I went full scale."	Rationalization	Do not argue. Review what happened: where the needle was at the final approach fix and what the scan was doing. Ask, "What were you looking at when it started to move?"
"Approach gave me a bad vector."	Projection	Replay the clearance and have the student read back what was assigned. Then teach how to anticipate the intercept and when to ask ATC.
The student cancels whenever partial panel is on the syllabus.	Flight (avoidance)	Name the concern privately. Make the first partial-panel block short and simple, straight-and-level, so it ends in success.
The student says "fly the needles" but cannot say what to do when the glideslope needle shows one dot high.	Communication barrier: overuse of abstractions	Make it concrete: one dot high means you are above the glidepath, so make a small pitch-and-power correction and watch the needle start to move. Then have the student explain it back.

7. Levels of learning in the instrument airplane

Use the four levels of learning to check where a student really is, and to set the next lesson:

- **Rote:** the student can recite the lost communication route rule (assigned, vectored, expected, filed).
- **Understanding:** the student can explain why the rule exists and what ATC expects them to do.
- **Application:** the student flies a holding entry or an approach to the standard.

- **Correlation:** the student handles a change they have not practiced, such as an amended clearance with a failed attitude indicator, by combining what they know.

A student who can recite the procedure but cannot fly it is at the rote level. More reading will not fix that. More structured practice, with you asking "why" at each step, will.

8. Teaching the scan with the fundamentals

- **Building block:** teach one skill at a time, full panel before partial panel, straight-and-level before turns (Chapter 2). Each block is a success the student can build on, which also protects their confidence.
- **Demonstration-performance:** explain, demonstrate, have the student do it while you coach, then let them do it alone while you evaluate.
- **Correct the scan, not the needle:** when altitude drifts, ask "What have you not looked at?" The student learns to find the error themselves, which is the skill they will need alone in IMC.
- **Short, specific feedback in the air:** use one-word cues ("Altitude," "Trim"). Save the full critique for the ground, when the student can listen.

9. How the evaluator may test this

A common approach is a described student: "Your student keeps losing altitude in turns and says the attitude indicator is wrong. Teach me." A strong answer names the likely cause (a scan breakdown, a defense mechanism, or both), the fundamentals principle behind it, and the specific change you would make to the next lesson.

How to teach it

- Brief the lesson with a clear objective: "Today we will fly one ILS, and I want you to hold the glideslope within one dot."
- Check understanding by asking the student to explain it back.
- In the airplane, give short commands ("Altitude," "Trim," "Heading") rather than long instructions.

Where to find it

- Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9): the chapters on human behavior and the communication process.
- The Flight Instructor Instrument PTS (FAA-S-8081-9E), Area I Task B.

That was a sample.

The full guide explains every Task the same way.

The full CFII Study Guide (111 pages) includes:

- Three chapters on the rating, teaching instrument flying, and the rules you work under
- Every Flight Instructor Instrument PTS Task, with how to teach it
- A maneuver lesson template for your own lessons
- A numbers-to-know quick reference and a checkride scenario bank

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