

October 2026 Edition

The Airman Testing Community Advisory (ATCA) is produced by the General Aviation and Commercial Division, Training and Certification Group, the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) office responsible for practical test and airman certification standards, certification testing programs, and supporting reference materials. This advisory provides an additional channel for change management communications to our stakeholders and supports the correlation of training and testing for an effective certification process.

Stakeholder Communications

You are encouraged to submit questions and comments about our products and services by emailing us at TestingStandardsComments@faa.gov.

Standards

Sport Pilot Practical Test Standards (PTS)

14 CFR part 61, section 61.14(a)(12), (13), and (14), Incorporation by Reference, was amended, effective 09/14/2026. The rule is available at https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-61/subpart-A/section-61.14. FAA-S-8081-29A, Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Airplane Category, Rotorcraft Category Gyroplane, and Glider Category; FAA-S-8081-30A, Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Lighter-Than-Air Category; and FAA-S-8081-31A, Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Powered Parachute Category and Weight-Shift-Control Aircraft Category were revised to harmonize with the Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certificate (MOSAIC) final rule and are now available at Practical Test Standards.

Reference Materials

The Training and Certification Group continually evaluates our internal processes for developing, revising, and maintaining reference materials to ensure programmatic efficiency and greater agility in keeping pace with advancements in aviation safety and technology.

Reference Handbooks

Handbooks are essential reference materials that provide comprehensive information on subject matter directly tied to the Airman Certification Standards (ACS). They define the scope and breadth of expected knowledge and serve as the foundation for developing valid and reliable airman knowledge test questions. Given their role in ensuring aviation safety and training and testing consistency, handbooks must remain current, accessible, and efficiently maintained.

To reduce delays in disseminating handbook updates, the Training and Certification Group has implemented several changes to the publication process. They are as follows:

- The elimination of lead-in chapter pictures, indices, and glossaries.
- The elimination of unnecessary graphics and pictures and, where applicable, the addition of a reference location.
- The elimination of duplicative content and, where applicable, the addition of a reference location.
- The removal of superfluous material around the subject beyond what is needed to understand/learn the subject/topic.

The Training and Certification Group believes this addresses the aviation community's need for consistent content and a predictable publishing schedule. It will ensure that critical safety information is consistently available, up to date, and widely disseminated.

Note: Handbook titles will remain the same and will retain the same identifying numbering system (FAA-H-8083-XX).

Reference Handbook(s) Publishing December 2026

- FAA-H-8083-25D, Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge
- FAA-H-8083-5A, Weight-Shift Control Aircraft Flying Handbook

Reference Handbook(s) Publishing June 2027

- FAA-H-8083-21C, Helicopter Flying Handbook

Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT)

Airman Certification Oral and Practical Project

The Training and Certification Group and the Airman Certification Standards Exam Board (AEB) continue to implement several improvements that directly support the goals of reducing administrative burden, improving consistency, minimizing human error, and better aligning the testing process with real-world maintenance practices.

The recent updates to the practical test bank address many workflow, usability, and standardization concerns identified by stakeholders and Designated Mechanic Examiners (DME).

- **Practical questions have been revised to align directly with assigned projects, Aircraft Maintenance Manuals (AMM), and Advisory Circulars (AC).** This improves consistency between tests and reduces reliance on subjective "look up and explain" questioning. As a result, the testing experience is more streamlined, practical, and better aligned with real-world maintenance environments and industry practices.
- **DMEs have been given greater discretion in determining acceptable answers** based on project details, manufacturer information, and approved reference materials. This supports more efficient and realistic applicant evaluations while maintaining flexibility within standardized guidance.
- **DMEs are encouraged to review revised questions during pretest planning.** This helps ensure smoother transitions during testing and builds familiarity with system updates before applicant testing begins.
- **The solicitation for DME-submitted practical projects and related questions** demonstrates an ongoing commitment to improving integration with real-world examiner workflows. This effort has received positive engagement and continues to strengthen alignment between testing systems and current industry maintenance practices.

Collectively, these actions represent meaningful progress toward the broader goals identified by DMEs, including reducing administrative inefficiencies, minimizing opportunities for human-factor errors, improving examiner usability, and creating a more integrated and practical airman certification process.

For questions or interest in participating in project submissions, contact 9-AVS-Mechanic-Test-Generator@faa.gov.

Practical Test Banks Updates

All AMT practical projects have been reviewed and updated with the new framework.

- **Retesting:** If an applicant took their initial practical test before the activation of the new framework, the retest will be based on the content and requirements that were in effect before that activation date.
    - Aviation Mechanic General (AMG)—Changes activated April 20, 2026.
    - Aviation Mechanic Airframe (AMA)—Changes activated July 20, 2026.
    - Aviation Mechanic Powerplant (AMP)—To be activated in 2027.
- **Guidance Update:** AM.I.L.S1—Malfunction or Defect Report.
    - For project AM.I.L.S1, the intent is to evaluate the applicant's ability to accurately complete Form 8010-4, Malfunction or Defect Report. Although the preferred method of submission is through the electronic Service Difficulty Reporting System (SDRS) site, the online system should not be used for this project unless tied to an actual discrepancy. Instead, DMEs should have applicants complete a fillable PDF or a printed copy of Form FAA 8010-4. Guidance on properly completing Form 8010-4 is available in the SDRS Field Instructions (pages 7-11) and AC 20-109B, Service Difficulty Reporting System (Air Operator/Air Agency/General Aviation/Unmanned Aircraft Systems).

Minimum Tools and Equipment List (MTEL) Updates

When revisions to the MTEL require DMEs to obtain new or additional tools, equipment, or materials, prior notification will be issued to designees via this advisory and the Designee Management System (DMS). The current MTEL is available in FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 5, Chapter 5, Section 11. DMEs may submit MTEL feedback to 9-AWA-AFS-300-Correspondence@faa.gov.

DMEs should obtain the following additional tools, equipment, or materials to comply with the upcoming MTEL revisions. Each item lists a target date for inclusion in the MTEL.

- Liquid Penetrant Kit to conduct non-destructive testing (December 2026): AM.I.K.S5

Airman Knowledge Testing

Airman knowledge tests play a crucial role in the certification process, ensuring airmen possess the knowledge required to operate safely within the National Airspace System (NAS).

To uphold the integrity and quality of these knowledge tests, a rigorous review of the questions is essential. Two primary approaches are used to review test questions.

1. **Analyzing Performance Statistics:** Testing Standards Section Subject Matter Experts (SME) collaborate closely with the test development team at PSI Services, LLC, the vendor for the FAA's Airman Certificate Testing Service (ACTS) contract, to evaluate each question's performance. Questions that do not meet established performance benchmarks are flagged for internal review to ensure they remain equitable and challenging for all test takers.

2. **Examining Candidate Comments:** While taking a knowledge test, candidates can provide feedback on questions they believe may have issues. This feedback provides firsthand insights and is routinely reviewed by SMEs in the Training and Certification Group to determine whether modifications are warranted.

When a question is selected for review, it undergoes a comprehensive analysis. This includes checking for spelling and grammatical accuracy, clarity, consistent terminology, structural integrity, and proper formatting. The review also ensures alignment with FAA regulations, airman certification standards, and FAA reference materials.

The Training and Certification Group is committed to keeping the public informed about significant updates to knowledge testing. While the specifics of active test questions remain confidential, the Testing Standards Section will continue to provide updates on knowledge tests through this advisory. These updates will include information on new test developments, changes to or removal of test content, terminology updates, and advances in test modernization.

Airline Transport Pilot Multiengine Airplane (ATM) Knowledge Test Update

Knowledge test items (test questions) regarding the Bombardier Dash 8 – Q400 aircraft will be removed from the ATM knowledge test beginning October 26, 2026. As of this date, the FAA will no longer test applicants on the Q400 aircraft. This change is the result of public inquiry. The ATM knowledge test is based on 14 CFR part 121, which focuses on air carrier operations. Turboprop aircraft, including the Q400, are no longer being used by airlines (part 121 operators). Therefore, it was proposed that the FAA no longer ask turboprop-powered aircraft questions on the ATM knowledge test.

The FAA will continue to present items (test questions) for the Bombardier CRJ900, as this aircraft represents a common entry-level aircraft for pilots working for a part 121 operator.

PSI's Test Taker Portal Transition

In the first quarter of 2027, the FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Program will transition to PSI's next-generation testing platform, bringing streamlined scheduling and test-taker check-in, improved operational efficiency, and increased system reliability. PSI's Global Proctoring System (GPS) and Unified Candidate Scheduling (UCS) will provide a more secure, FedRAMP-compliant environment designed specifically for federal testing.

As the transition date approaches, scheduling information for the new platform will be posted on PSI's website located at https://faa.psiexams.com. PSI will contact applicants directly if the change may affect an existing appointment.

PSI has announced the transition to its test center network and will provide further updates in the coming months to support a seamless changeover. Any questions can be sent to faachangequestions@psionline.com.

Airman Knowledge Test Assessments

The FAA's ACTS contract requires PSI to assess FAA Airman Knowledge Tests to ensure compliance with current standards for educational and psychological testing. This process does not change test question content, and all questions will continue to align with the applicable ACS codes and references. In collaboration with the Training and Certification Group and aviation industry partners, assessments for the following exams are underway.

Flight Instructor:

- Flight Instructor Airplane (FIA)
- Flight Instructor Helicopter (FRH)
- Fundamentals of Instructing (FOI)

Aviation Maintenance Technician:

- Aviation Maintenance Technician General (AMG)
- Aviation Maintenance Technician Airframe (AMA)
- Aviation Maintenance Technician Powerplant (AMP)

Modifications based on the assessments of the exams mentioned above are anticipated to be implemented in 2027**.**

PSI has created a new resource page for applicants taking mechanic tests accessible at [FAA Aircraft Mechanic Applicants (AMT) | PSI Exams](#).

Graphics Conversion Project Update

In partnership with PSI, the Training and Certification Group is upgrading its Airman Knowledge Testing System by embedding images directly in test questions, eliminating the need for printed test supplements. This initiative aims to provide candidates with a more integrated and modern testing experience. The Training and Certification Group SMEs review each test question with an embedded image to ensure accuracy. After implementation, PSI's test development team and the Training and Certification Group's SMEs closely monitor the questions' performance to verify that they meet the intended standards.

Once an image is embedded in a test question, it becomes an integral part of that question. Consequently, the specific images used in active test questions cannot be previewed, as doing so would compromise the exam's integrity.

Candidates preparing for FAA exams are encouraged to visit the PSI True Talent site regularly to access sample test questions and become familiar with the new format.

The following exams feature questions with embedded images:

- Commercial Pilot
- Private Pilot
- Sport Pilot
- Unmanned Aircraft
- Instrument Rating
- Aviation Maintenance Technician (General, Airframe, and Powerplant)

- Parachute Rigger
- Flight Engineer
- Flight Instructor
- Airline Transport Pilot

As the Graphics Conversion Project progresses, we remain committed to transparency. We recognize that some test questions may require specific measuring tools. For those questions, applicants will have the tools they need to respond accurately.

At this time, we cannot provide details about the design or operation of on-screen tools. However, any significant changes or new electronic tools introduced into the testing environment will be communicated, well in advance, via this advisory. This will ensure candidates have ample time to become familiar with the tools.

The date for removing testing supplements from test centers has not yet been set. However, the public will receive ample notice before this change takes effect. Until the removal, candidates will continue to have access to the testing supplement for their exam.

As of October 26, 2026, the Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA) and Unmanned Aircraft General-Small (UAG) tests began featuring image-based questions not included in the test supplements. This update enhances the tests by incorporating clearer, up-to-date images from the latest Sectional Charts, Instrument Approach Charts, and Low Altitude Enroute Charts. For image examples, please refer to the previous edition of the ATCA. The images are sourced from the following FAA materials:

- VFR Charts
- IFR Low Altitude Charts

Candidate Information Bulletins (CIB)

CIBs contain valuable information for test candidates, including details on examination registration and scheduling procedures, reporting to the examination site, test authorization and reauthorization requirements, and test content specifications.

Below are links to exams with available CIBs. This list will be updated as evaluations of additional exams are finalized.

- Airline Transport Pilot Multiengine (ATM)/Airline Transport Pilot Single Engine Airplane (ATS)
- Commercial Pilot Airplane (CAX)
- Commercial Pilot Helicopter (CRH)
- Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA)
- Instrument Rating Helicopter (IRH)
- Private Pilot Airplane (PAR)
- Private Pilot Helicopter (PRH)
- Unmanned Aircraft General (UAG)

Learning Statement Codes

The current version of the Learning Statement Reference Guide for Airman Knowledge Testing is available at Learning Statement Codes.

ACS Codes

Of the **91** FAA airman knowledge tests offered, **33** now have ACS codes displayed on the corresponding Airman Knowledge Test Reports (AKTR). The light blue shading of the test code indicates these tests in the FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix.

Matrix

A revised FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix was posted on **September 25, 2026**. The updated Matrix includes clearer language concerning Added Rating tests. See below.

Page 10:

AFA	Flight Instructor Airplane **(Added Rating)**
AFG	Flight Instructor Glider **(Added Rating)**
GFA	Flight Instructor Gyroplane **(Added Rating)**
HFA	Flight Instructor Helicopter **(Added Rating)**

The above Added Rating tests may be taken ONLY if the applicant already holds a Flight Instructor Certificate. (14 CFR § 61 Subpart H). **Flight Instructors holding a Glider Rating and seeking to add an Airplane Rating must take the Flight Instructor Airplane (FIA) Knowledge Test.** Added Rating tests do not apply to Flight Instructors with only a Sport Pilot Rating. (14 CFR § 61 Subpart K)

Page 11:

AIF	Flight Instructor Instrument Airplane **(Added Rating)**
HIF	Flight Instructor Instrument Helicopter **(Added Rating)**

The above Added Rating tests may be taken ONLY if the applicant already holds a Flight Instructor Certificate with an Instrument Rating in another category of aircraft.

Frequently Missed Knowledge Test ACS Codes

The Frequently Missed Knowledge Test ACS Codes Report is available at Missed ACS Codes. It is based on Safety Performance and Analysis System (SPAS) data for the specified timeframe, includes ACS codes administered at least 100 times, and displays ACS codes missed on specific knowledge tests more than 70% of the time.