CFI ACS Companion

Area of Operation I | Task E

Elements of Effective Teaching in a Professional Environment

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This companion document breaks down every element of the CFI ACS Area of Operation I, Task E: Elements of Effective Teaching in a Professional Environment. Each knowledge element, risk management item, and skill demonstration is mapped to the Aviation Instructor's Handbook Chapter 8 and page numbers. Task E is one of the two required tasks that every initial CFI applicant must be tested on.

> **Primary Sources:** Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9B), Chapter 8; Flight Instructor ACS (FAA-S-ACS-25); Aviator's Model Code of Conduct (secureav.aero); WINGS Pilot Proficiency Program (FAASafety.gov)
>
> **Testing Rules:** At least one knowledge element (plus any missed on the FOI written). At least one risk management element. All skill elements. Scenario-based evaluation to the maximum extent possible (8900.1). The underlying private/commercial ACS questions are also fair game.
>
> **Required Task:** The evaluator must select Task E and Task F for every initial flight instructor applicant. This task will be on your checkride.

KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS

K1 — Aviation Instructor Responsibilities

`FI.I.E.K1 (five subtopics: K1A through K1E)`

AIH Chapter 8, pp.8-1 to 8-4

Knowledge topic 1 breaks into five subtopics, each addressing a facet of aviation instructor responsibility. Chapter 8 opens with a boxed list of instructor responsibilities. The notable omission from the knowledge topics is ensuring aviation safety — it appears in the chapter introduction but shows up as risk management element R1 instead.

K1A — Helping Learners Learn

The handbook opens with a simple statement: learning should be an enjoyable experience. That does not mean making it easy. Aviation draws people because it is challenging — there is always something to learn and master. Your job as an instructor is to present that challenge in a way that keeps your learner engaged and motivated, not overwhelmed or bored. If you are uncomfortable with a subject, your student can tell — and so can the examiner.

K1B — Providing Adequate Instruction

Page 8-1: the flight instructor must analyze the learner's personality, thinking, and ability. Many CFI applicants are not prepared for this on the checkride. They sit down and launch straight into the lesson without learning anything about their student first. What is their background? What experiences do they bring? Where are they in training? Those questions shape how you tailor the instruction.

> **Get to Know Your Student First:** Before teaching anything, acknowledge that you need to learn about your student. In a checkride scenario, you can say: "In a real-world lesson, here are the questions I would ask my new student before we begin." That shows the examiner you understand the principle even inside the role-play.

K1C — Training to Establish Standards of Performance

The Airman Certification Standards are the standards of performance. When teaching a maneuver, the ACS tells you what your student needs to achieve. Use the ACS as your assessment benchmark, not personal preference or technique.

K1D — Emphasizing the Positive

Starting at page 8-2, this section warns against leading with disaster scenarios. As an experienced pilot, it feels natural to say "if you miss this during preflight, the airplane could crash." But delivering that to a brand-new student conditions them to associate flying with danger before they have even taxied. Remember from the laws of learning: first impressions are indelible. A student who associates stalls with death may carry that fear through their entire training career. Lead with the positive when introducing new concepts.

K1E — Minimizing Learner Frustrations

Page 8-4 lays out practical strategies for keeping frustration in check:

- **Motivate learners —** Keep the energy up and the purpose clear.
- **Keep learners informed —** Use a syllabus so they know where they are in the training progression.

- **Approach learners as individuals —** Ties back to K1B.
- **Give credit when due —** When a student greases a landing, acknowledge it.
- **Criticize constructively —** Give the root cause and a corrective action, not just "that was bad."
- **Be consistent —** Apply your grading philosophy consistently across lessons.
- **Admit errors —** The Air Force Weapons School motto: humble, credible, approachable. Admitting a mistake builds credibility, not the opposite.

K2 — Flight Instructor Responsibilities

FI.I.E.K2

AIH Chapter 8, pp.8-5 to 8-6

K2 expands beyond general instructor responsibilities to the specific duties of a flight instructor. Page 8-5 opens with an important line: learning to fly should provide learners with an opportunity for exploration and experimentation. Too many new instructors focus exclusively on training to the test — steep turns, stalls, slow flight, ground reference maneuvers. The student learns each maneuver individually but never explores the airplane's envelope or experiments with what happens in unfamiliar conditions.

> **Beyond the Circus Tricks:** Consider cross-controlled stalls: most pilots do not encounter them until CFI training, yet every private pilot must demonstrate a forward slip to land — a cross-controlled maneuver. If that slip goes wrong, would it not be better if the student had already seen what a cross-controlled stall looks and feels like?

Exploration exercise: Trim the airplane for straight and level hands-off flight at about 50% power. Ask your student what will happen when they add full throttle. Most expect the airspeed to increase, like pressing the gas pedal in a car. When the nose pitches up, airspeed drops, then the nose drops, airspeed rises, and the airplane starts oscillating — demonstrating natural stability and real aerodynamics in action.

Additional Responsibilities & Ensuring Learner Skill Set

Page 8-5 lists eight additional responsibilities including evaluation of learner piloting ability and physiological obstacles (headset volume, air sickness, ear blockage, fatigue). If a normally strong student is suddenly performing poorly, start asking physiological questions before assuming a training problem.

Page 8-6 gives 14 bullet points of skills you must ground-train before solo and before checkride. Before solo, you are the only person certifying that this student can safely operate an aircraft alone. The skill set includes positive aircraft control, stall/spin awareness, collision avoidance, runway incursion avoidance, and controlled flight into terrain awareness.

K3 — Flight Instructor Qualifications & Professionalism

FI.I.E.K3

AIH Chapter 8, pp.8-7 to 8-8

You need to know every piece of equipment installed on the aircraft you use for training. "My CFI did not know how to use it" is not a valid reason for a student not knowing a system. If equipment is installed, the CFI is expected to understand it — even if that means self-study on your own time. Beyond equipment knowledge, the handbook emphasizes staying current and credible through participation in professional development programs and reading safety publications. The chapter includes 12 tips from veteran flight instructors.

K4 — Professional Development

FI.I.E.K4

AIH Chapter 8, pp.8-8 to 8-9

Aviation is changing rapidly, and instructors need to keep up. Other professions require continuing education on annual or semi-annual cycles. CFIs are only required to do recency experience every 24 calendar months, which is relatively infrequent compared to Part 121 operations where continuing education happens quarterly.

> **Build a Professional Development Plan:** If your DPE asks how you plan to maintain and develop your skills as a CFI, here is a strong answer: commit to completing at least one WINGS knowledge topic and one WINGS flight activity every quarter. Work with an FAASTeam representative for the flight training. That gives you quarterly professional development that you can also pass along to your students as a proficiency plan.

Government Resources: The FAA WINGS Program

The WINGS — Pilot Proficiency Program at FAASafety.gov is the backbone of CFI professional development. WINGS has two categories: ground activities (hundreds of online courses covering weather, flight planning, human factors, and more) and flight activities (structured flight lessons with grade sheets and syllabi). Every checkride you have passed counts as a WINGS flight activity.

The flight activities are where WINGS really shines. Search for any topic — takeoffs, night operations, steep turns — and you will find ready-made lesson plans with worksheets and grade sheets. Use them directly in your teaching and give your students WINGS credit simultaneously. The VSL website has a WINGS Navigator tool that lays out quarterly training plans (Plan Alpha and Plan Bravo). Alternate them year to year for a two-year professional development cycle.

Commercial Organizations

Two organizations serve the flight instructor community: NAFI (National Association of Flight Instructors) and SAFE (Society of Aviation and Flight Educators). Both offer a Master CFI program — a professional development track that demonstrates advanced commitment to the craft. Being a member of one or both and working toward a Master CFI designation is a strong answer on a checkride when asked about professional development plans.

Staying Current on Publications

SAPFOs (Safety Alerts for Operators), NTSB Safety Alerts, Advisory Circulars, and InFOs are all part of the CFI's reading list. SAFO 11004, for example, covers runway incursion prevention actions — a document the FAA expects you to know and one that connects directly to the runway incursion avoidance task in Area of Operation 2.

K5 — Instructor Ethics and Conduct

FI.I.E.K5

AIH Chapter 8 & secureav.aero

The ACS references the Aviator's Model Code of Conduct, hosted at secureav.aero. This is an external document clearly endorsed by the FAA — the Aviation Instructor's Handbook links directly to it. The site offers a Flight Instructor's Model Code of Conduct that you can download, sign, and present to your DPE.

Checkride Tip: Having the Flight Instructor Model Code of Conduct printed and signed is a strong professionalism move. It shows preparation, commitment to ethical standards, and sets you apart from applicants who answer the ethics question with vague generalities.

RISK MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS

R1 — Fulfilling Instructor Responsibilities

FI.I.E.R1

AIH Chapter 8, p.8-1

This risk management topic takes us back to the responsibility that did not make the knowledge topic list: ensuring aviation safety. This is the most important thing you do as a flight instructor. When you sign a student off for solo, you are allowing someone to operate an aircraft on the trust of your endorsement alone. When you sign an 8710 recommending them for a checkride, you are attesting to the FAA that this person is ready. If they fail, the DPE is usually more disappointed in the instructor than the student. Too many failures and the FSDO may issue a 709 re-examination — questioning your ability to instruct.

R2 — Exhibiting Professionalism

FI.I.E.R2

AIH Chapter 8, pp.8-8 to 8-9

The handbook devotes the majority of Chapter 8 to instructor responsibilities, qualifications, development, and conduct. Personal appearance gets roughly two paragraphs. It matters, but it is far from the most important piece.

Instructor Do's

- Be professional at all times
- Present a professional appearance and personal habits
- Maintain a calm demeanor — your attitude is contagious
- Practice safety and accident prevention at all times
- Minimize learner frustration, motivate learners, keep them informed
- Be consistent and admit errors

Instructor Don'ts

- Model irresponsible flight behaviors
- Say one thing but do another — avoid hypocrisy
- Disrespect the learner
- Set the learner up for failure (different from letting them fail in a controlled learning environment)
- Correct errors without explanation — give the why and the how to fix it

> **Appearance in Context:** Think about airline pilots in a collared shirt and tie. Would they fly the plane just as safely without the tie? Absolutely. But the passengers who glance into the cockpit feel better seeing professionals dressed professionally. Appearance is the first impression; everything else in this chapter sustains credibility over time.

SKILL ELEMENTS

You must demonstrate all of the following skill elements.

S1 — Deliver Instruction Consistent with Professional Standards

FI.I.E.S1

There is one skill, and it encompasses everything above. Deliver a ground or flight lesson on an evaluator-assigned task while demonstrating the instructor responsibilities and professional characteristics from K1 through K5. This is where the Venn diagram overlap with Area of Operation 4 becomes nearly 100%: if you are delivering a well-prepared lesson on a flight maneuver that includes runway incursion avoidance, uses a proper lesson plan (Task C), and is delivered in a professional manner that demonstrates all five knowledge topics from this task — you have covered four required ACS tasks in a single lesson.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here is how to weave four ACS tasks into a single lesson on the checkride:

Step 1: Get to Know Your Learner (K1B)

Before launching into the lesson, ask about their background, experience, and where they are in training. This demonstrates K1B and shows the evaluator that you understand the importance of tailoring instruction to the individual.

Step 2: Build a Proper Lesson Plan (Task C)

Use proper objectives and teaching methods. Your lesson plan satisfies the course development task from AOO 1. Have it organized, referenced to the ACS, and ready to present.

Step 3: Deliver the Maneuver Lesson (AOO 4 + Task E)

Teach the maneuver using ACS standards of performance (K1C), emphasizing the positive (K1D), minimizing frustration (K1E), and incorporating safety throughout (R1). Your delivery itself demonstrates professionalism (R2).

Step 4: Weave in Runway Incursion Avoidance (AOO 2, Task C)

Since every flight involves a takeoff and landing, incorporate runway incursion avoidance naturally into the lesson. Reference SAFO 11004 and proper taxi procedures.

Step 5: Professional Development & Ethics (K4, K5)

Present your WINGS-based professional development plan and your signed Flight Instructor's Model Code of Conduct. These demonstrate commitment to ongoing growth and ethical standards.

QUICK REFERENCE — AOO I, TASK E

Code	Element	Source
K1A	Helping learners learn	*AIH Ch 8, p.8-1*
K1B	Providing adequate instruction	*AIH Ch 8, p.8-1*
K1C	Standards of performance	*AIH Ch 8, p.8-2*
K1D	Emphasizing the positive	*AIH Ch 8, pp.8-2 to 8-4*
K1E	Minimizing learner frustrations	*AIH Ch 8, p.8-4*
K2	Flight instructor responsibilities	*AIH Ch 8, pp.8-5 to 8-6*
K3	Qualifications & professionalism	*AIH Ch 8, pp.8-7 to 8-8*
K4	Professional development	*AIH Ch 8, pp.8-8 to 8-9*
K5	Ethics and conduct	*AIH Ch 8 & secureav.aero*
R1	Fulfilling instructor responsibilities	*AIH Ch 8, p.8-1*
R2	Exhibiting professionalism	*AIH Ch 8, pp.8-8 to 8-9*
S1	Deliver instruction consistent with K1-K5	—

VSL ACE Guide: Every ACS element links directly to the source material. Green buttons take you straight to the right page in the AIH, AFH, and dozens of other FAA documents. Get the ACE Guide at vslaviation.myshopify.com