

Free IFR Oral Exam Scenario Pack

10 source-anchored scenario cards for instrument students, rusty IFR pilots, and checkride-prep pilots.

Built from Nick Rae's Instrument Rating Oral Exam Scenario Cards. This free pack is intentionally small: chart-specific traps, Card 28, and current-procedure-heavy cards stay excluded until a concrete current chart example and human review are complete.

Included	Excluded on purpose
IFR currency vs proficiency Personal minimums Alternates and fuel Readbacks and holding MDA discipline VOR/IFR equipment checks	Card 28 Chart/TPP-specific traps Current-procedure-heavy cards Anything needing a live chart example before public use

Safety note: Study aid only. Not flight instruction, legal advice, or a substitute for current FAA publications, your CFII, aircraft POH/AFM, charts, NOTAMs, or regulations. Verify current sources before relying on any answer in training or flight operations.

How to use this pack

For each card: read the scenario, answer out loud, then compare your answer to the target. The goal is not to memorize a script. The goal is to prove you can separate legality, risk, aircraft status, weather, and ATC workload under IFR pressure.

If your answer starts with “it depends,” finish the sentence. Depends on what source, what weather, what aircraft, what clearance, what equipment, and what escape option?

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Card 01 — IFR currency is not proficiency

Section: Readiness

Scenario

You have six approaches, holding, and intercept/tracking logged within the lookback window, but you have not flown actual IMC in months.

Prompt

What can you legally do, and what should you say about readiness?

Say it out loud

Separate legality from proficiency. If legal currency is met, you may act as PIC under IFR; if proficiency is weak, set stricter personal minimums, fly with an instructor/safety pilot, or choose VMC/low-workload IFR before hard IMC.

Common trap

Treating legal currency as proof you are sharp enough for low ceilings or convective/rusty workload.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.I.A.K1, IR.I.A.R1, IR.I.A.R2; 14 CFR §61.57(c) for instrument recent experience.

Card 02 — Personal minimums under pressure

Section: Readiness

Scenario

The TAF is legal for your destination and alternate, but ceilings are dropping, night is approaching, and you are tired after work.

Prompt

How do you brief the go/no-go decision without sounding timid or careless?

Say it out loud

Use PAVE/IMSAFE-style risk thinking: legal does not equal smart. State the actual weather, your currency/proficiency, aircraft/equipment, escape options, and external pressure. Decide whether to delay, add fuel, pick a better alternate, or cancel.

Common trap

Starting with “it is legal” and never discussing personal minimums or fatigue.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.I.A.R2, IR.I.A.R3; IR.I.B.R1; FAA-H-8083-15B risk management discussion.

Card 05 — Alternate required by the 1-2-3 idea

Section: Weather/Alternates

Scenario

Destination forecast around ETA is 900 ft ceiling and 2 SM visibility. The airport has an approved approach.

Prompt

Do you need an alternate for IFR planning?

Say it out loud

Yes. Under the IFR alternate rule in 14 CFR §91.169, for non-helicopters, if the forecast weather from one hour before to one hour after ETA is below 2,000 ft ceiling or below 3 SM visibility, include an alternate. Then verify the alternate weather minima, approach availability, equipment, notes, and practical usability.

Common trap

Thinking “has an approach” means no alternate is needed, or calling the 1-2-3 teaching aid the regulation itself.

Source anchor

14 CFR §91.169; FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.I.B.S4; IR.I.C.K1d.

Card 07 — Fuel reserve answer without mush

Section: Planning/Fuel

Scenario

Your planned IFR flight is 1.8 hours. Destination is marginal and an alternate is required.

Prompt

What is the legal minimum fuel plan, and what conservative margin might you add?

Say it out loud

Plan fuel to fly to the first intended airport, then to the alternate, then 45 minutes at normal cruise. Conservatively add margin for vectors, holding, missed approach, stronger winds, reroute, and weather deterioration.

Common trap

Saying only “45 minutes reserve” while forgetting the destination-to-alternate leg.

Source anchor

14 CFR §91.167; FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.I.C.K3c, IR.I.C.R7, IR.I.C.S1-S2; IR.III.B.R1.

Card 11 — Clearance readback trap

Section: ATC Clearances

Scenario

Clearance delivery says: "Cleared to Sacramento Executive Airport via radar vectors, then as filed. Maintain 3,000. Expect 6,000 ten minutes after departure. Departure frequency 120.95, squawk 4621."

Prompt

What must you read back and set up before taxi?

Say it out loud

Read back all assigned and critical clearance items: clearance limit, route, initial altitude, expected altitude/time, departure frequency, and squawk. Write it down, set radios/transponder/nav, and query anything unclear before movement. Treat CRAFT as a copying aid, not regulatory text.

Common trap

Only reading back squawk/frequency, missing route or altitude, or acting like a mnemonic replaces understanding the clearance.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.III.A.K1, IR.III.A.R1, IR.III.A.S1-S2; AIM clearance/readback references.

Card 17 — Holding speed and setup

Section: Holding

Scenario

You are 4 minutes from the holding fix and still at cruise power/speed.

Prompt

When should you configure for holding?

Say it out loud

Per ACS skill standard, change to holding airspeed appropriate for altitude when 3 minutes or less from, but before arriving at, the holding fix; set power as needed for fuel conservation and stabilized entry.

Common trap

Blasting into the fix at cruise and then trying to salvage the pattern.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.III.B.S2.

Card 19 — Minimum fuel versus emergency

Section: Holding

Scenario

After holding and vectors, you can still land with required reserve only if everything goes normally.

Prompt

What do you say to ATC?

Say it out loud

If your fuel state means you cannot accept undue delay on reaching the destination, advise ATC “minimum fuel” early. Minimum fuel is an advisory, not an emergency declaration and not automatic priority handling. If the situation degrades so a safe landing with required reserve is no longer assured, declare an emergency.

Common trap

Using “minimum fuel” as magic priority words, or waiting too long to declare an actual emergency.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.III.B.R2; AIM fuel-advisory/emergency references; 14 CFR §91.3.

Card 22 — Nonprecision: MDA discipline

Section: Approaches

Scenario

You are flying a localizer approach with an MDA and no runway environment in sight at MAP.

Prompt

What is the correct decision?

Say it out loud

Maintain at or above MDA unless the §91.175 conditions are met: the aircraft is continuously in a position for a normal descent to landing, flight visibility is not less than prescribed, and the required runway/approach visual references are distinctly visible and identifiable. At MAP without those conditions, initiate the missed approach.

Common trap

Ducking below MDA because the runway “should appear any second” or forgetting the flight-visibility condition.

Source anchor

FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.VI.A.R7, IR.VI.A.S12-S13; 14 CFR §91.175(c).

Card 38 — VOR check before IFR use

Section: Equipment/Legal

Scenario

You plan to use VORs for IFR navigation. The receiver worked last month, but no check is logged.

Prompt

What must be true?

Say it out loud

If you are using VOR equipment under IFR, it must be maintained/checked under an approved procedure or operationally checked within the preceding 30 days and found within allowed tolerances. If you use the operational-check path, record the place, bearing error, date, and signature. If relying on approved GPS instead, explain that distinction clearly.

Common trap

Assuming “it receives a signal” is the same as IFR-legal VOR use, or forgetting the log/record requirement.

Source anchor

14 CFR §91.171; FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.VI.A.S3; IR.I.C.K1.

Card 39 — Required IFR equipment is mission-specific

Section: Equipment/Legal

Scenario

Your airplane is legal for day VFR, but you want to file IFR in IMC.

Prompt

What equipment/legal checks matter?

Say it out loud

Check the airplane, not just the pilot. For IFR, verify §91.205(d) IFR instruments/equipment, required inspections, altimeter/static/altitude-reporting checks under §91.411 when operating IFR in controlled airspace, transponder checks under §91.413 when a transponder is used/required, navigation/communication capability for the route and approaches, GPS/database/AFMS authorization if applicable, and aircraft limitations.

Common trap

Thinking the instrument rating alone makes the airplane IFR-ready, or reducing IFR equipment legality to one memory acronym.

Source anchor

14 CFR §§91.205, 91.411, 91.413; FAA-S-ACS-8C IR.I.A.S1, IR.I.C.K1; FAA-H-8083-15B.