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## Advice from your peers:

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### Networking certifications: How to pass your exams

27 Jul 2007 | Jared Heinrichs, A+ and MCP certified

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*This networking certification advice was one of the winning articles selected from SearchNetworking.com's CCNP Video Mentor contest.*

I was able to pass all my network certification exams with flying colors by doing the following:

- **First, research which books are good.** I find that you have to buy more than one because some authors explain certain ideas and topics better than others; some books hardly touch on subjects that are crucial to the exams.
- **Play, play and play some more with the technology you are studying.** If you are going after your A+ or Network + and you don't have the technology to play with, understanding key concepts is going to be difficult. Now that a lot of the enterprise devices have made it to consumer goods, I recommend installing the software trials. Like anything, you must spend money to get money.
- **Try and stay up to date with technology and understand what the acronyms mean.** If you don't love what you are doing this will be very hard. With so many acronyms out there, it is *much* easier to remember what they mean if you understand what they stand for. Even if you can't remember what the acronym does, you can normally understand what it might do. For example, someone new to networking might not know the meaning of DNS or DHCP. Once they know that these acronyms stand for Domain Name Service and Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol, they are that one step closer not only to acing the exams but to keeping that info with them on the job site, which is really the most important test.
- **Although many people use exam questions that they find on the Internet, I do not recommend it.** Trying to memorize these questions will only frustrate you because exam questions change regularly. In the end, you will finish the exam much faster if you just know how to work out the questions.
- **The one tip that I learned at a very early age is to make flash cards.** Flash cards are great. If you make them yourself, you are studying them at the same time. Try and get a friend or family member to help you with the cards. Also, try to randomize the cards, because it's amazing how well the human brain remembers patterns.
- **My last piece of advice for you is to create questions that you think may be featured in the exam and practice them.** If you are not sure, look at the questions in a text book. Are there areas they didn't ask questions on? Do you know how to repeat the steps blindfolded? How do you set up "X" service? If you don't know, go back and try and learn it again.

To sum up, certification is a lot of work and you must be willing to take it on. Many shortcuts are available, but people who take shortcuts hardly ever get anywhere. Work with the products and you will be comfortable with them -- and well enough prepared to pass your tests.

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