

CCDE Practical Tips

As I prepare for another quixotic attempt at the CCDE practical, I have collected a set of test taking tips. These tips are based on talking to exam administrators, reading all the materials, studying the demo tests, and mostly, attending the preparation session given at this year's Networkers. Of course, I have not yet passed this test, so you can take my tips with a grain of salt. Your own mileage may vary. Every test has its own "personality," and the CCDE practical is no different. Here are some assumptions I am going to make when I sit for the test.

- 1. The test is by necessity an artificial scenario. Like watching a science fiction movie, you have to "suspend disbelief" in order to complete it. Specifically, if a device is described as having certain features, you should accept that as fact, even if you know no such device exists.
- 2. The scenarios are usually described in a series of email messages. You should assume that statements made in the emails are true (unless explicitly stated as an opinion).
- 3. Remember that the test is not a hardware test, nor a budgeting test.
- 4. You are asked to design to requirements of the scenario.
- 5. A lot of what goes into a real design are 'soft' requirements that have nothing to do with technology.
- 6. Don't base your answers to questions on your answers to previous questions.
- 7. If you are asked to choose a technology from a list of choices, assume that list contains the only possible choices.
- 8. Some of the questions require you to fill in a table or matrix, comparing technologies with requirements.
- 9. If you believe there is a problem with a question, or the scenario will not work as stated, use the comments to communicate your observations.
- 10. Be aware that the multiple choice questions frequently contain "red herrings" or distractors (as they are technically called). Not all the choices are real ones.
- 11. On some questions, you can receive partial credit if there are multiple parts to the question.
- 12. Drag and drop design questions are scored based on whether your answer meets the requirements of the scenario.

It doesn't have to be an "optimal" design. Let me know if you find these tips helpful. See y'all in Chicago!

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