

What You Need to Know to Prepare for the Exams

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The Microsoft Windows 2000 MCSE certification exams aren't easy, and require a great deal of preparation. The exam questions measure real-world skills. Your ability to answer these questions correctly will be greatly improved by as much hands-on experience with the Windows 2000 product as you can get. That said, this appendix provides some practical and innovative ways for you to prepare for the Windows 2000 exams.

Know Your Exam

Before you take any certification exam, make sure you've got the latest scoop on it. For the Microsoft Windows 2000 MCSE certification exams, that means going directly to the horse's mouth, or in this case, to Microsoft's Web site.

The exam objectives published in this book are current as of the date this book went to press, but Microsoft reserves the right to change exam objectives at any time. Microsoft publishes an Exam Preparation Guide for each exam that contains vital information, not the least of which is a complete list of the exam's objectives. You can view and print the latest Exam Preparation Guides for the Windows 2000 MCSE certification exams by visiting the following Web sites:

<http://www.microsoft.com/Mcp/exam/stat/SP70-210.htm>

<http://www.microsoft.com/Mcp/exam/stat/SP70-215.htm>

<http://www.microsoft.com/Mcp/exam/stat/SP70-216.htm>

<http://www.microsoft.com/Mcp/exam/stat/SP70-217.htm>

If for some reason you aren't able to access the Exam Preparation Guides at these sites, try the main Microsoft Training & Certification Web site:

http://www.microsoft.com/train_cert

Or even better, visit the Microsoft Certified Professional Program Web site:

<http://www.microsoft.com/mcp>

While you're visiting this site, there are a number of pages I recommend you take a look at, including: the "Step-by-Step Guide" to certification, "How Microsoft Certified Professional Exams Are Developed," "Practice Test," "MCP Programs in Forefront of Testing Innovations," "What to Expect at the Testing Center," "Your Exam Results," and so on. By the time you're finished, you'll have a much better feel for the exams.

I want to say just a few words about exam format and the types of questions to expect. When the Microsoft Windows 2000 MCSE certification exams are first released, the exams will probably include around 50 to 70 items each. Later on, after Microsoft has had time to gather and process statistics from each of these exams, it will probably convert the exams to adaptive exams. A computer adaptive exam typically involves fewer questions (normally about 15 to 30) than a standard, fixed-form exam, and based on whether the examinee answers each question correctly or incor-

rectly, the computer determines the difficulty of the next question presented. Aside from the number of questions and the amount of time allowed to take the exam, the main difference between a traditional, fixed-form exam and an adaptive exam is that in a fixed-form exam you can skip questions, or go back and review previously answered items, but on an adaptive exam you can't do this.

In addition to standard multiple-choice items, you may see some non-standard types of questions on the Windows 2000 MCSE certification exams. For example, plan on finding some really long, complex multiple-choice questions in which you have to determine, for a specific action taken, precisely what results are achieved. You might encounter a "Select-and-Place" item that requires you to drag-and-drop an answer on an appropriate field. You may also find (particularly after the exam has been out for a while) some simulation questions in which you're asked to perform a Windows 2000 task by working with a simulated user interface.

To become familiar with the types of questions found on the exams, I recommend you download and run the demos from the Microsoft Certified Professional Program Web site, and I strongly urge you do as many practice tests as you can get your hands on, such as those included on the compact disk that accompanies this book, before you take any of the exams.

Know Your Testing Center

Microsoft exams are given at authorized testing centers. In the United States and Canada, you can register (and pay) for an exam by calling Sylvan Prometric at (800) 755-EXAM. (That's 800-755-3926.) Outside the United States and Canada, contact your local Sylvan Prometric Registration Center. You may also be able to register for an exam online at <http://www.sylvanprometric.com>.

I urge you to check out your testing center *before* you take an exam. Call ahead. Ask about the hardware they use for their testing computers. If some computers are faster than others, ask for the seat numbers of the faster computers, and request one of those seats when you schedule your testing appointment with Sylvan Prometric. You might even consider visiting the testing center before you schedule an exam there. This will give you an opportunity to see what the testing environment will be like.

When you arrive at the testing center, you'll need to show two forms of identification, including one photo ID. You'll also need to accept the terms

of a Microsoft Non-Disclosure Agreement before you take an exam. You may also have to complete a demographic survey before you take an exam. Finally, if you've never taken a Microsoft certification exam before, you can take an exam tutorial before you begin.

Tips for Before, During, and After the Exam

I'm sure that everyone who's ever studied for and passed a certification exam has their own ideas about what helped them pass: tricks, tips, a lucky rabbit's foot, and so on. Here are some of the things that work for me, and that I recommend you do:

Before the Exam

- Do the Lab Exercises in this book. Get as much hands-on practice with Windows 2000 as you can stand. Then get more.
- Review the Key Point Summary sections and answer all of the Assessment Questions at the end of each chapter just before taking an exam.
- Pay special attention to the Exam Tips throughout this book — these pointers will help you focus on important exam-related topics.
- Take as many practice exams as possible.
- Take the exam preparation process seriously. These exams are tough!
- Don't study all night before the test. A good night's sleep is often better preparation than the extra studying.
- Try to schedule the exam during your own "peak" time of day. In other words, if you're a morning person, try not to schedule the exam for 3:00 p.m.

On Exam Day

- Dress comfortably. The more comfortable you are, the more you'll be able to focus on the exam.
- Don't drink a lot of coffee or other beverage before taking an exam. I think you know where I'm headed. You don't want to spend precious exam time running back and forth to the restroom.

- Arrive at the testing center 10 to 15 minutes early, and don't forget your picture ID.
- If you have any questions about the rules for the exam, ask the exam administrator *before* the exam begins. The exams are timed, so avoid using valuable test time for questions you could have asked earlier.

During the Exam

- Answer the easy items first. Unless you're taking an adaptive exam, the testing software enables you to move forward and backward through the exam. Go through all of the items on the test once, answering the items you're sure of first; then go back and spend time on the harder items.
- Remember, there aren't any trick questions. The correct answer will always be among the list of choices.
- When choosing an answer, eliminate the most obviously incorrect answers first. (Think of this as using your "50-50" on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*.) This will make it easier for you to select the answer that seems most right to you.
- Answer all of the items on the exam. An unanswered item is scored as an incorrect answer. So, if you're unsure of an answer, it can't hurt to make an educated guess.
- I know it's difficult, but try to relax. During the exam, take a few deep breaths here and there. People often make avoidable, careless mistakes when they're stressed and when they rush.

After the Exam

- After you finish the exam, the testing center will give you a written examination score report indicating whether you passed or failed, and how you performed on each section.
- If you don't pass an exam the first time, you can use this report to determine the areas where you need additional study. Then, you can retake the exam at a later date for an additional fee.

**TIP**

Microsoft has revised its policy for retaking exams, primarily to increase security. If you don't pass an exam the first time, you can take it again at any time. If you don't pass the exam the second time, you must wait at least 14 days until you retake it again.

- Don't get discouraged if you don't pass an exam the first time — or the second time. Many highly intelligent, seasoned professionals fail a test once, twice, or more times before eventually passing it. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.