

[Slightly OT] Preparing for the RHCE Exam

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Over the past few months I've read a few posts from people asking what books or other sources would be good to prepare for the RHCE exam. I took the test last week and I'd like to share how I prepared. Obviously, I am bound by non-disclosure to never reveal the exam content, so don't even bother asking me.

Going into the test I feel I was probably handicapped in three areas. Number 1: I had never taken the test before. Number 2: I didn't take the class. Number 3: I had never even seen RH EL 3.0 before. However, I've been using the consumer editions of RH since 4.x and I administer two machines running AS and AWS 2.1 so I felt I knew my way around a RH system fairly well.

The total time I spent preparing for the test was 2 weeks. First, I purchased Michael Jang's book (RHCE something Edition 3). Total reliance on that book would have been disastrous since it was from a time when RH 8.0 was only beta. Given that the book was outdated and there were a decent number of inaccuracies and typos I felt I needed to look elsewhere. However, the book was enough to get me started (and I felt good knowing that I could spot the inaccuracies).

The next place I looked was the rhce2b.com website. Again, a good portion of the information was outdated. I don't know that there were any inaccuracies, but I found some of the verbage on the practice questions to be confusing.

My last fallback was the prep-guide on the RedHat website. I spent my second week of preparation making sure that I knew how to do every single thing in that guide. All of the information for learning what's listed in the prep-guide can be found on RedHat's website, from tldp.org, or from the documentation installed with the associated packages. I don't feel I'm an expert in all of the areas listed in the prep-guide, but I know enough to either configure a functional service or where to look for documentation to tell me what to do.

Was I nervous as hell when I took the test? Yes, I was. The testing center was in Austin, Tx and I had to drive in that morning from Houston.

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I was tired from driving, hungry (at least they had free food at the testing place) and wired from drinking too much coffee. Even though there were people who had taken the class doing some last minute cramming I decided not to do any last minute studying.

After the test was finally over I was confident that I had done well. The test was difficult, but extremely fair. Each task has a real-world purpose and the elimination of the multiple choice section also eliminated the possibility of being confused by verbage (this has always been my weakness with multiple choice tests). I felt that I had completed every task successfully. The only thing left at that point was to wait for the results. The RedHat website says results can take three days to arrive and since I took the test two days before Christmas I wasn't expecting to hear anything for at least a week.

My results came the next day (less than 24 hours after finishing the test). I passed.

So, for anyone who wants to take the test but doesn't feel like dropping \$2500 on the class, I believe the best study guide is the prep-guide on the RedHat website. Make sure you know how to do everything it says. Beyond that, knowing your way around a RH distro doesn't hurt either.

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