**What are server roles, role services, and features?**

**Roles**

A server role is a set of software programs that, when they are installed and properly configured, lets a computer perform a specific function for multiple users or other computers within a network. Generally, roles share the following characteristics.

* They describe the primary function, purpose, or use of a computer. A specific computer can be dedicated to perform a single role that is heavily used in the enterprise, or may perform multiple roles if each role is only lightly used in the enterprise.
* They provide users throughout an organization access to resources managed by other computers, such as Web sites, printers, or files that are stored on different computers.
* They typically include their own databases that can queue user or computer requests, or record information about network users and computers that relates to the role. For example, Active Directory Domain Services includes a database for storing the names and hierarchical relationships of all computers in a network.
* As soon as they are properly installed and configured, roles function automatically. This allows the computers on which they are installed to perform prescribed tasks with limited user commands or supervision.

**Role services**

Role services are software programs that provide the functionality of a role. When you install a role, you can choose which role services the role provides for other users and computers in your enterprise. Some roles, such as DNS Server, have only a single function, and therefore do not have available role services. Other roles, such as Remote Desktop Services, have several role services that can be installed, depending on the remote computing needs of your enterprise.

You can consider a role as a grouping of closely related, complementary role services, for which, most of the time, installing the role means installing one or more of its role services.

**Features**

Features are software programs that, although they are not directly parts of roles, can support or augment the functionality of one or more roles, or improve the functionality of the server, regardless of which roles are installed. For example, the Failover Clustering feature augments the functionality of other roles, such as File Services and DHCP Server, by allowing them to join server clusters for increased redundancy and improved performance. Another feature, Telnet Client, lets you communicate remotely with a telnet server over a network connection, a functionality that enhances the communication options of the server.