

# **STUDYING FOR SUCCESS IN CLOUD CERTIFICATION**

A PERSONAL AND PROVEN GUIDE

# ABOUT ME



Over 20 years in  
information technology,  
with over 13 years in  
software engineering



Currently serving in a  
Cloud Solutions Architect  
role



6+ years with cloud  
platforms, primarily  
AWS, but also GCP and  
Azure



4 AWS Certifications  
since August 2018



MBA (emphases in  
marketing & technology  
management), 2009



MSc – Information  
Systems, 2011

# WHY CERTIFICATION?

Validates skills

Role based exams

Provides industry recognition

Access to technical resources

Swag

Specialized sessions and forums

Better responses and dialogue with engineers and architects from the cloud provider

# WE NEED STEENKIN' BADGES



Badges open up discussions... place them in your email signature and you'll be surprised by the conversations you may have. Links open up to verification of your Certification.

# PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS



Additional opportunities



Training and support

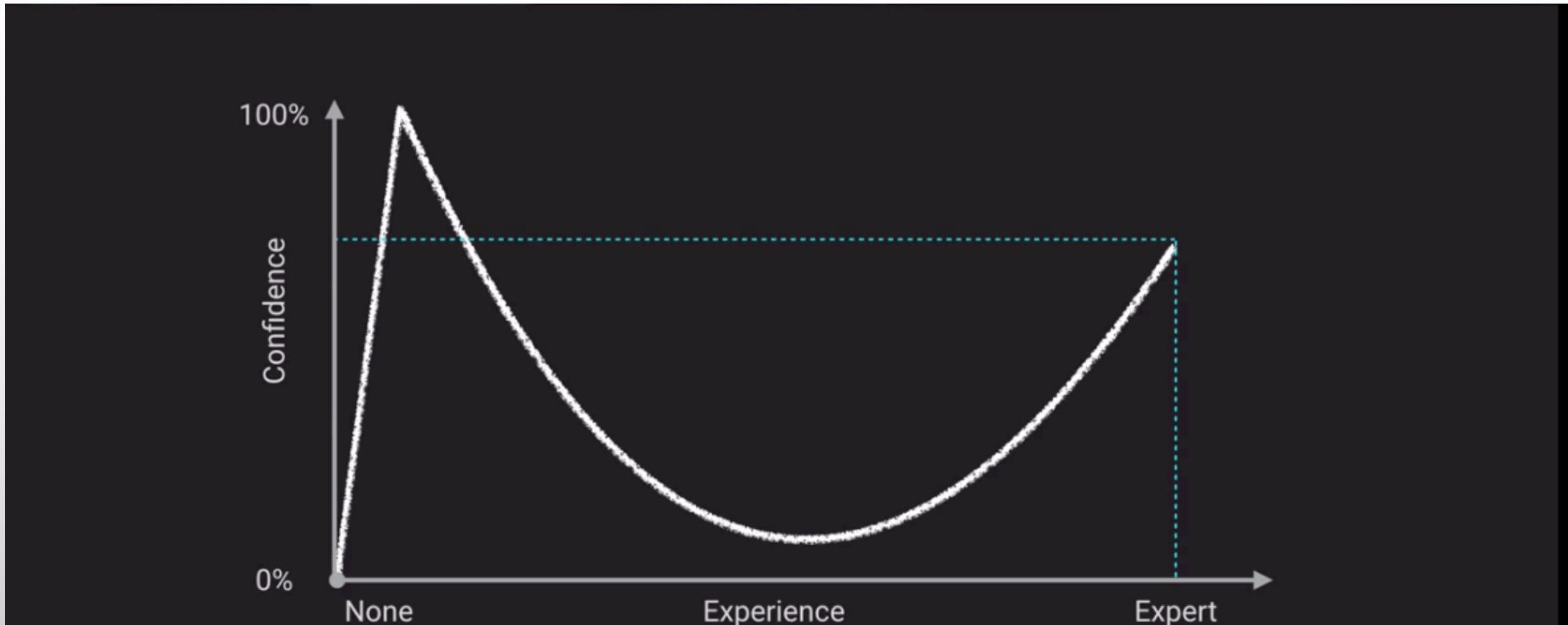


Access to technical resources



Early access to beta programs

# UNSKILLED & UNAWARE OF IT (DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT)



"Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments",  
Kruger, J. & Dunning, D., Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 77(6), Dec 1999, 1121-1134.

# BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

## Blooms Taxonomy



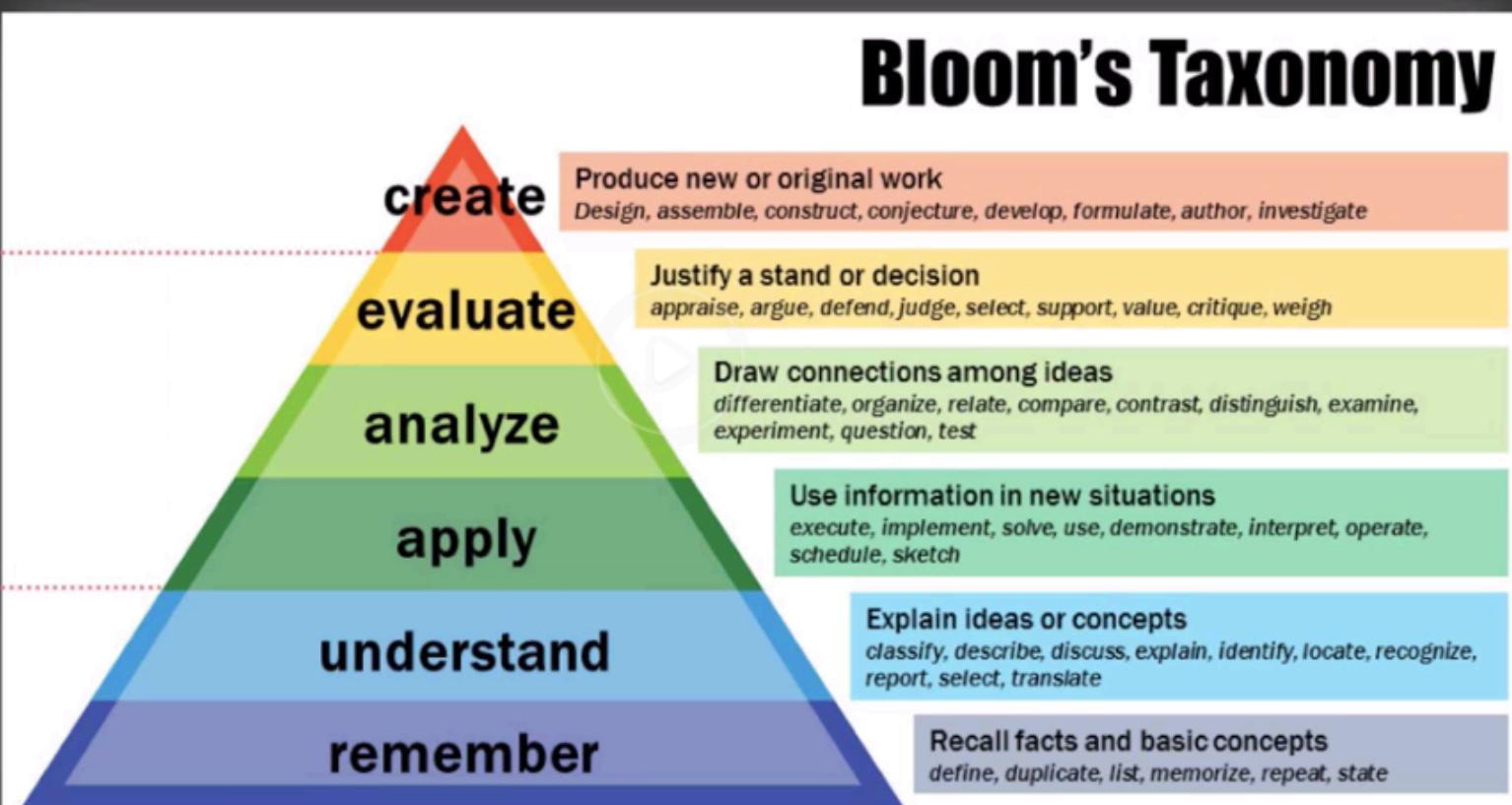
A CLOUD GURU

## Bloom's Taxonomy

AWS  
Objective

Professional  
Exams

Associate  
Exams

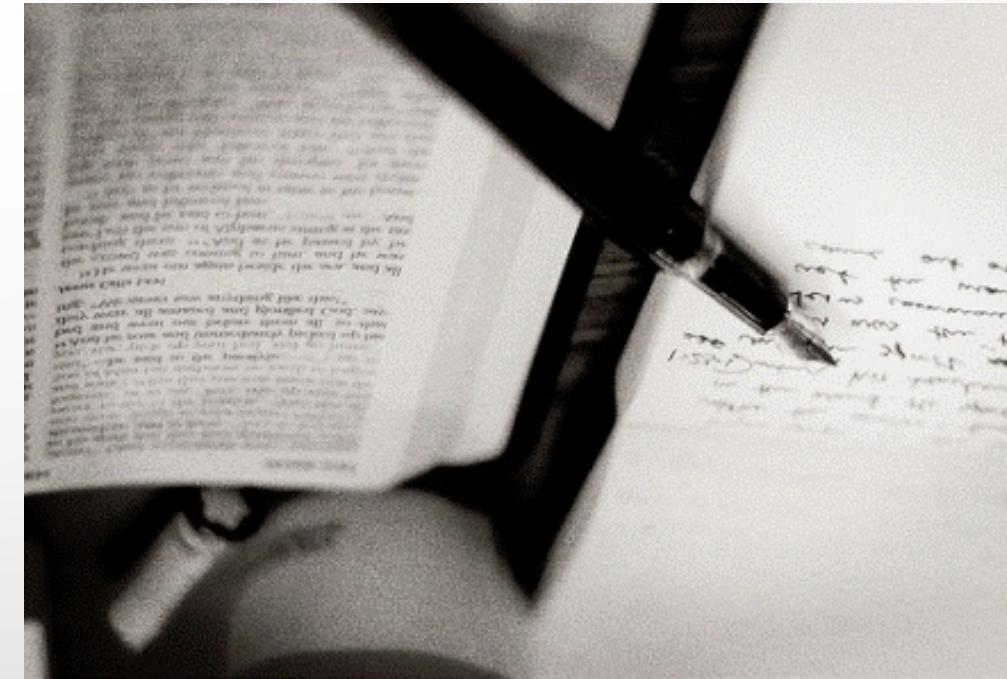
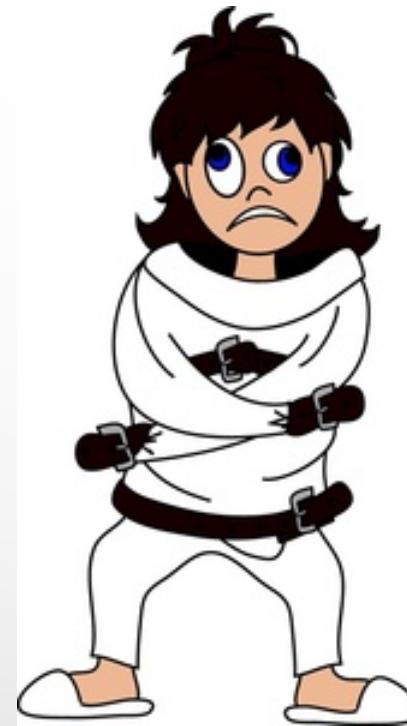


Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching



Attributed to [Author] via [Source]

# COMMITMENT





Everyone will be different as far as their work, home, and family obligations



I personally spend 5-10 hours / week, working section by section

Course

Hands-on practice

Exam if applicable



Work at your own pace... the end goal is to obtain the certification, not finishing first

# TIME

# MONEY

- EXAMS RANGE FROM \$100-300 PER EXAM
  - DISCOUNTS OFFERED (1/2 OFF IN SOME CASES) AS A RESULT OF PREVIOUS CERTIFICATIONS
- COURSES CAN VARY WILDLY; I BUDGET ~ \$10 PER COURSE, NO MORE THAN \$20
- MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTIONS (E.G. A CLOUD GURU) CAN ADD UP
- CLOUD PLATFORM ACCOUNT... SETUP BILLING ALARMS AND WORK TO STAY IN THE FREE TIER WHEN YOU CAN
- OVERALL, I SPEND ROUGHLY ~ \$100 – \$200 / MONTH ON OVERALL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING CLOUD ACCOUNTS



# GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

- SIGN UP FOR AN ACCOUNT IN THE APPLICABLE CLOUD PLATFORM
  - SETUP BUDGET ALARMS AND THRESHOLDS
  - MOST CLOUD PROVIDERS OFFER FREE-TIER SERVICES
  - RUN THROUGH THE LABS YOURSELF HANDS-ON, AND EXPERIMENT
  - THE BEST INSTRUCTORS WILL WARN WHEN A LAB WILL NOT QUALIFY FOR THE FREE-TIER OFFERINGS

# COOL COURSES

- UDEMY (<HTTP://WWW.UDEMY.COM>)
  - CAUTION... PRICING CHANGES BASED ON USER
  - TYPICALLY I STAY IN THE \$10-20 RANGE, AND OFTEN BASE DECISIONS ON PREVIOUS COURSES OR REVIEWS
- A CLOUD GURU (<HTTPS://ACLOUD.GURU>)
  - ALSO ON UDEMY
  - OFFERS PRACTICE EXAMS
- LINUX ACADEMY

# COOL COURSES (PART DEUX)



Platform providers  
offer training:

AWS direct from their  
training site  
Google via coursera  
Azure direct from their  
training site



Brief Me Now  
(<https://www.briefmenow.org>)



Coursera (<https://www.coursera.com>)

# A CLOUD GURU

## Course Outline

### CHAPTER 1

#### Introduction

✓ Welcome	01:10
✓ Introduction	03:27
✓ About the Exam	04:36
✓ About This Course	09:53
✓ About the Labs	02:51

### CHAPTER 2

#### Data Stores

✓ Introduction	00:59
✓ Concepts	04:26
✓ S3	10:14
⌚ Glacier	04:40
⌚ Elastic Block Storage	06:52

request a record of completion.

 Request Record of Completion

## Exam Simulator MEMBERS ONLY

Hone your skills by practicing under real exam conditions.

 Open Simulator

# UDEMY

The screenshot shows a Udemy course page. At the top, the Udemy logo and the course title "Ultimate AWS Certified Developer Associate 2019 - NEW!" are visible. To the right are "Your progress" and "Share" buttons. The main content area features a video player with a play button, titled "API Gateway – Deployment Stages". Below the video are navigation arrows and a yellow footer bar with the text "AWS Certified Developer © Stephane Maarek". At the bottom, there are tabs for "Overview" (which is selected), "Q&A", "Bookmarks", and "Announcements". On the right side, a sidebar titled "Course content" lists several sections: "Section 1: Course Introduction" (7/7, 15min), "Section 2: Code & Slides" (Download, 1/1, 1min), "Section 3: AWS Fundamentals: IAM + EC2" (15/16, 1hr 23min), "Section 4: AWS Fundamentals: ELB + ASG + EBS" (7/7, 43min), "Section 5: AWS Fundamentals: Route 53 + RDS + ElastiCach..." (9/9, 43min), and "Section 6: AWS Fundamentals: Amazon S3" (10/10, 46min). Each section has a collapse/expand arrow.

Udemy

Ultimate AWS Certified Developer Associate 2019 - NEW!

Your progress Share

## API Gateway – Deployment Stages

AWS Certified Developer © Stephane Maarek

Overview Q&A Bookmarks Announcements

### About this course

Become an AWS Certified Developer! Learn all AWS Certified Developer Associate topics. PASS the Certified Developer Exam

### Course content

- Section 1: Course Introduction 7 / 7 | 15min
- Section 2: Code & Slides Download 1 / 1 | 1min
- Section 3: AWS Fundamentals: IAM + EC2 15 / 16 | 1hr 23min
- Section 4: AWS Fundamentals: ELB + ASG + EBS 7 / 7 | 43min
- Section 5: AWS Fundamentals: Route 53 + RDS + ElastiCach... 9 / 9 | 43min
- Section 6: AWS Fundamentals: Amazon S3 10 / 10 | 46min

# PRACTICE EXAMS

## Good practice exams sites:

- Brain cert ([www.braincert.com](http://www.braincert.com))
- Whizlabs ([www.whizlabs.com](http://www.whizlabs.com))
- A cloud guru (offered with each course now)  
(<https://acloud.guru>)
- Udemy (<https://www.udemy.com>)
- Platform providers

**Do not try and memorize questions... these are similar, but not copies of those on your exam.**

## Question 1

Correct

Domain : Other

Your company is planning on move their on-premise MySQL database to an AWS RDS Instance. They want to understand what are the key activities that will be performed by AWS which would reduce the administrative activities of their IT staff. Which of the following is carried out by AWS for database hosted in the AWS RDS? Choose 2 answers from the options given below

- A. Create and maintain backups so that you can restore to a point in time recovery of 5 minutes ✓
- B. Create and maintain backups which are specially built for long term retention of 6 months to one year
- C. Installing critical security patches for the database ✓
- D. Optimizing database queries fired on the database

### Explanation:

Answer – A and C

Option B is incorrect since the maximum retention period possible for RDS databases is 35 days.

Option D is incorrect because query optimization is not at all related to RDS. Query optimization is related specifically to the respective database engine.

Option C is correct because Amazon RDS is a fully managed service. So, under the Shared Responsibility Model AWS will take care of the security patches.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Platform faqs & whitepapers

- I know a few people who have successfully passed based on just reading FAQs and white papers
- Many of the questions are based on platform documentation

Blogs and articles

Peers and team mates

Hands-on experience

# EXAM ASPECTS

- THE EXAMS ARE DESIGNED TO TEST THE FOLLOWING ABILITIES:
  - KNOWLEDGE OF THE CLOUD PLATFORM
  - CONTEXTUAL REASONING
  - TIME MANAGEMENT
  - COMPREHENSION SKILLS
  - WORKING UNDER PRESSURE

# ABOUT THE EXAM

Exams are updated every 2-3 years, and typically valid for 2-3 years

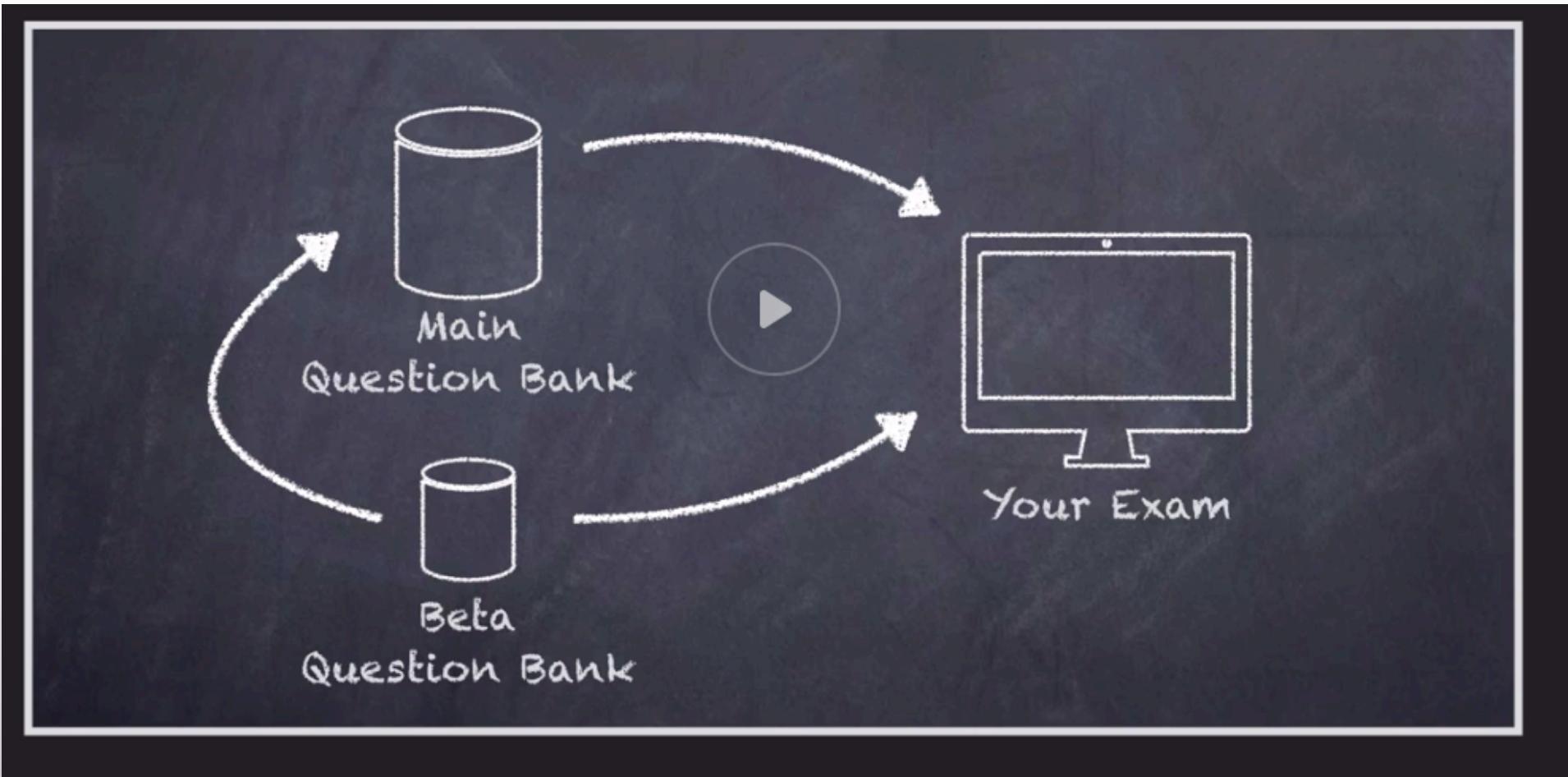
Consist of:

- Multiple choice (pick one)
- Multiple choice, multiple answer (pick 3 of 8 for example)
- Fortunately, no essay questions (hehe)

Several right answers, choose answers that are most appropriate based on context (read the question fully)

Each exam is dynamically generated, some consist of beta questions

# EVERY EXAM IS UNIQUE



# ABOUT THE EXAM PART II



Questions from 60 – 85



Time limit from 120 – 220 minutes



Ability to flag and revisit questions (**do this!!!**)



Look for **keywords** to identify what's being asked:

Lowest cost  
Secure  
Reliability



“select one or more responses that **best** complete the statement or answer the question



Designed to find gaps in your skills and knowledge... they will try and trick you!

# WHAT ABOUT NEW SERVICES?



Cloud services are constantly being offered



Typically services will appear on an exam after being ga for at least 6-12 months



Best to focus on core service offerings and practices

# SITTING FOR THE EXAM



- IT'S OK TO BE NERVOUS (I AM EVERY TIME)
- YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE ANYTHING WITH YOU TO THE EXAM ROOM (E.G. KEYS, PHONE, ETC.)
- WATCH YOUR TIME
- FLAG QUESTIONS YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT!!!!
  - FLAGGING CAN HELP YOU TO MAXIMIZE TIME AND ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS THAT YOU ARE CONFIDENT IN THE ANSWERS, WHILE COMING BACK TO REVIEW AFTER YOUR FIRST RUN THROUGH THE EXAM
- TAKE YOUR TIME !!!

# YOU FAILED THE EXAM, NOW WHAT?

Failure can be an opportunity to reset

While results are pass / fail, score will be made available after a few days

Scoring ~ 80% on practice exams is typically an indication that you are ready to sit for the exam

Review areas where you flagged questions

Take additional practice exams, review the areas where you may be weaker

Don't stress!!!

# QUESTIONS?

I HOPE THAT THIS HAS BEEN MEANINGFUL FOR YOU, AND THAT YOU CAN TAKE AWAY SOME TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU IN PURSUING CERTIFICATION.

TWITTER: [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM.AJLEVINSON](https://twitter.com/ajlevinson)

LINKEDIN: [HTTPS://WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/AJ-LEVINSON-9821B9B/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/aj-levinson-9821b9b/)

GITHUB: [HTTPS://WWW.GITHUB.COM/AJLEVINSON](https://www.github.com/ajlevinson)