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How (NOT) to fail CKA Exam in 2021 !!!

Abhinivesh Jain · Feb 3 · 5 min read

Are you surprised by the title of this article and wondering what it is going to cover? Let me first set the context behind this article. As we all know, Internet is full of CKA exam tips, some are running into so many pages that those can easily be converted into a book. While everyone covers the tips for passing this extremely tough exam, very few people (or perhaps none) have shared the common reasons of failing this exam. Here I am giving you practical tips based on my own 1st unsuccessful attempt. Hope you will find it useful. Please feel free to share your feedback and thoughts in comments section.

1. **Myth 1- Since it is open book exam, I don't need to remember anything**-> This is wrong assumption, you have to understand and remember several trivial things like-various imperative commands to answer quickly and correctly. You have to be very thorough with the k8s documentation related to any given topic so that you know exactly what to search and where to find the required information. e.g. searching persistent volume will point you to theory whereas searching for using PV in pod will give you examples. You don't want to waste time in searching and understanding the topic during the exam. In summary, always have your kubernetes documentation open while you are going thru any courses and use the documentation to find and answer practice questions. I would also recommend to read the documentation that covers given topic.

2. **Myth 2- Focusing on high weigtage question first will help you crack the exam**-> Problem with this approach is that you tend to give all your energy until you are able to solve any given question and then you loose time for other

questions. for example- In my last attempt I spent nearly 30 min. on one question and that was the single reason of my unsuccessful attempt. so I would recommend below strategy- Spend 5 min in going thru entire exam paper (from 1st to last question) at a glance so that you can quickly understand the complexity level and decide on how much time given question will take. After this start phase 1, where you do only simplest of all questions, without worrying about weightage, try to finish all of them in next 45 min. In this manner, you will be done with 9–10 questions with correct answers and you will have 70 min. to attempt remaining 7–8 questions. While you are in phase 1, keep on flaging questions that aren't done so that you can easily revisit them later. In next phase (phase 2), pick the question which is simplest of all remaining questions and keep on going in that order till the end of the exam. With this approach you will finish most of the questions. In a nutshell, focus on easy questions first.

3. **Always Refer to latest version of documentation**- CKA exam is revised within few weeks of new k8s release, every new release makes so many things obsolete so it is very important to refer to and practice on latest (or the exam version) k8s version. This advise is applicable for suggestion/tips also, if you are reading few year old blog then most likely those commands might not even work.

4. **Learn to switch and verify cluster context-** No popular couse gives you the option of practice test where you work on more than one cluster at a time so you hardly practice switching of cluster and chances of you doing something in wrong cluster is very high. Atleast I did this mistake. There are 6–7 clusters so if you do something wrong in one cluster, you not only loose the marks for that question but you also stand a chance to corrupt some settings for other questions so be very sure where you are. Running "kubectl get nodes" as first comment helps in knowing that quickly. Exam gives question of one cluster in a sequence but then with as per earlier advise (#2) you dont go in sequential manner.

5. **Focus on your weakness**- There are some topics where you will find yourself struggling like- Ingress, cluster upgrade etc. In such cases, understand that topic from various sources like- kubecon videos, books, other training material etc and then practice it. You should not have too many such weak points.

6. **Use your free attempt**- While there is nothing wrong in passing in 1st attempt with 100% marks but as such you don't get any special credit for that and you are loosing the free retake that is given in your exam price. If you are unsure about your readiness, go for the first attempt without any real hope. Try to make notes of

all the things that you could have done right and don't repeat the earlier mistakes in next attempt.

Miscellenous small tips

1. **Return to base node after every question-** This is also given as one of the suggestion in official documentation but sometimes you miss this. This is very important.

2. **Select-Right click-Copy-Paste works just fine**, no need to remember new commands that replaces our usual ctrl-c and ctrl-v.

3. **Learn to verify the answer in quick time-** Whenever you are solving any question, try to find out ways to prove that your answer is correct. e.g. if I create one network policy, I should be able to verify that it is doing what it is intended to do. or if you are redirecting the output to a file, quickly see if file has what it is suppose to have.

4. **Keep watching your remaining time once in a while-** Unfortunately there is no timer running with exam portal so you have to look at your laptop's time to see how far are you from end of the exam. Try to make a habit of watching your time for given question (specially the big one) and don't hesistate to leave it in between if it is taking unusually long. As per official documentation, there is partial marking as well but how part is not clear so chances are that you might still score something in partially attempted questions.

One last and most important advise is- **Practice, Practice and Practice.** you will not have time to learn the syntax or refer to help for forming the commands. Do as much practice as you can. In last few days before the exam, I preferred not to read anything but just keep on doing the practice questions. It helps in gaining speed and boosting your confidence.

With this, I have reached towards the end of this article, Hope you will find it useful.

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