IBM Zxplore: What is it, and how to use it up
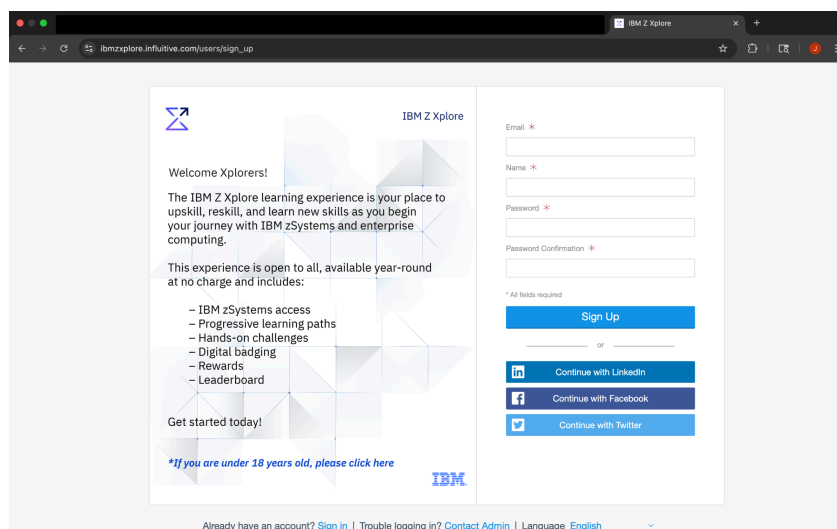
What is IBM Zxplore?

- Zxplore is a learning platform made by IBM that has tons of content covering all aspects of the mainframe

- You can learn everything from the basics of using Zowe, USS, Python, JCL, COBOL, navigating and using ISPF, RACF, and much more

- You learn about these topics by completing challenges. When you complete challenges, you can unlock more that dive deeper and earn badges

- These badges are certifications that you can add to LinkedIn and can be used to showcase what you have learned

- There are 3 badges: foundations, advanced, and all-star. Each requires completing a certain number of challenges tagged with the respective badge you are pursuing.

How to use it and Earn Badges?

- First, you will want to create an account by going to

  https://ibmzxplore.influitive.com/users/sign_up

- Once you are in, navigate to the learn tab at the top of the page, and you should see something like this.
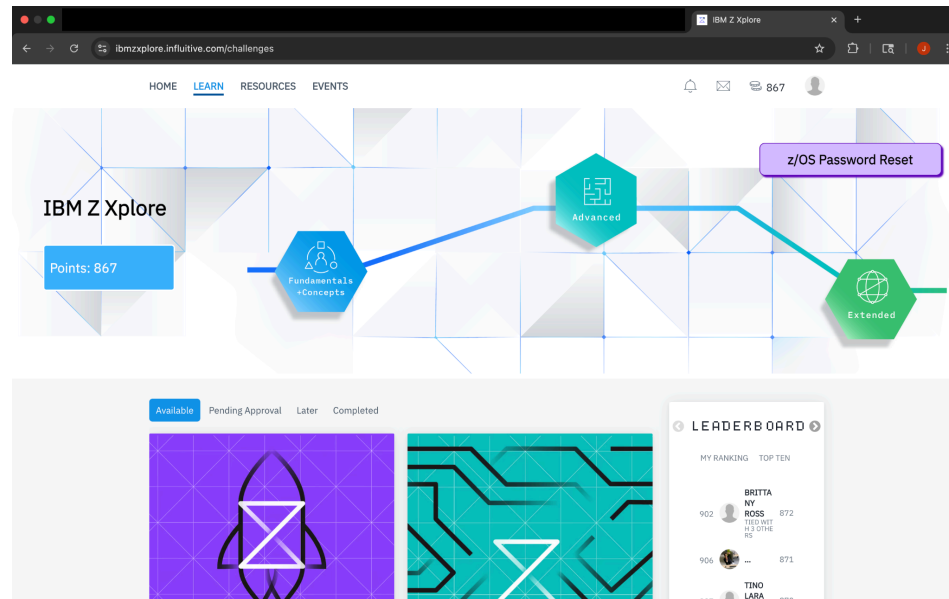
- I'd recommend bookmarking this page so it's easy to come back to
- In addition to earning badges for completing challenges, you also earn points for each challenge you complete. These points put you on a global leaderboard; besides that, they don't mean anything.
- On this page, you will also find your available challenges, ones that are pending approval, if you have saved any for later, and ones that you have completed.
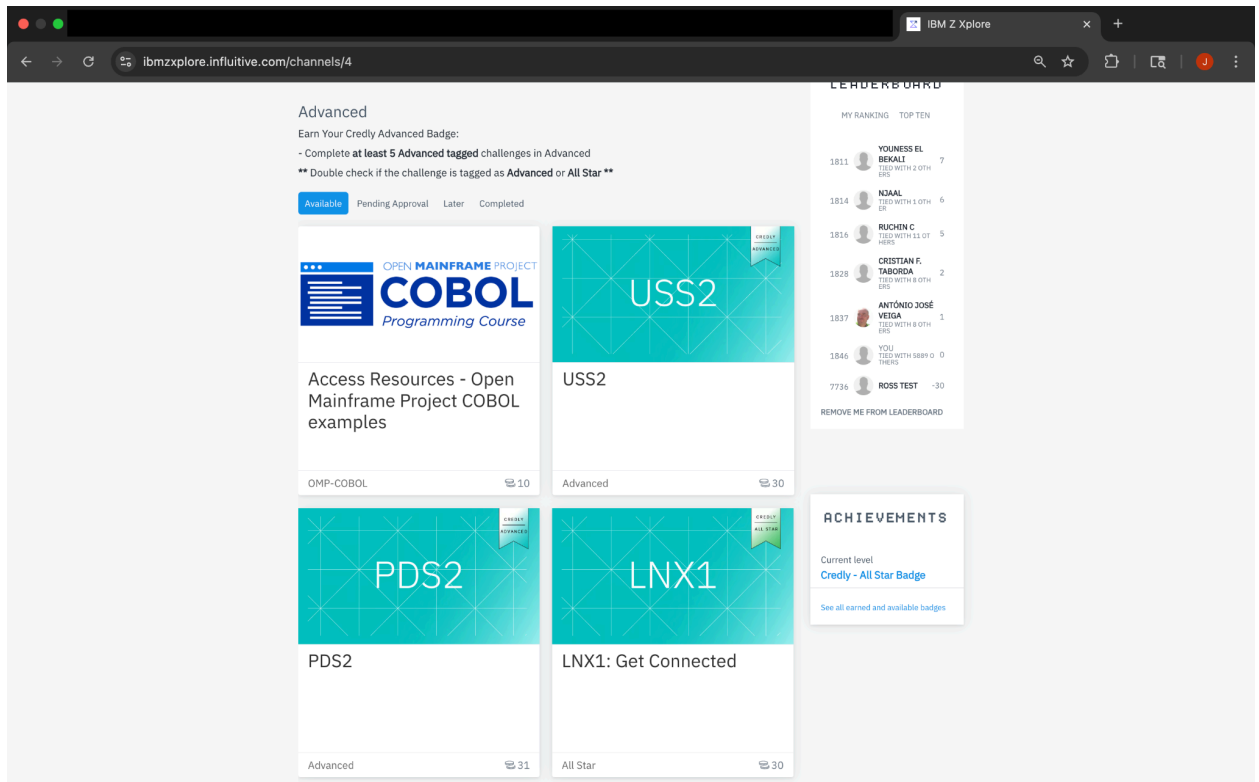
- This is what it looks like when you click on one of the challenge groups. You can see near the top that it tells you how many you need to complete to earn a badge. On the righthand side, under achievements, it will show your progress and how close you are to earning a badge.

- You can see at the bottom of each challenge, it has a tag under it that is associated with a badge, as well as how many points you will earn for completing that challenge. The more points that it is, usually the longer it will take to complete.
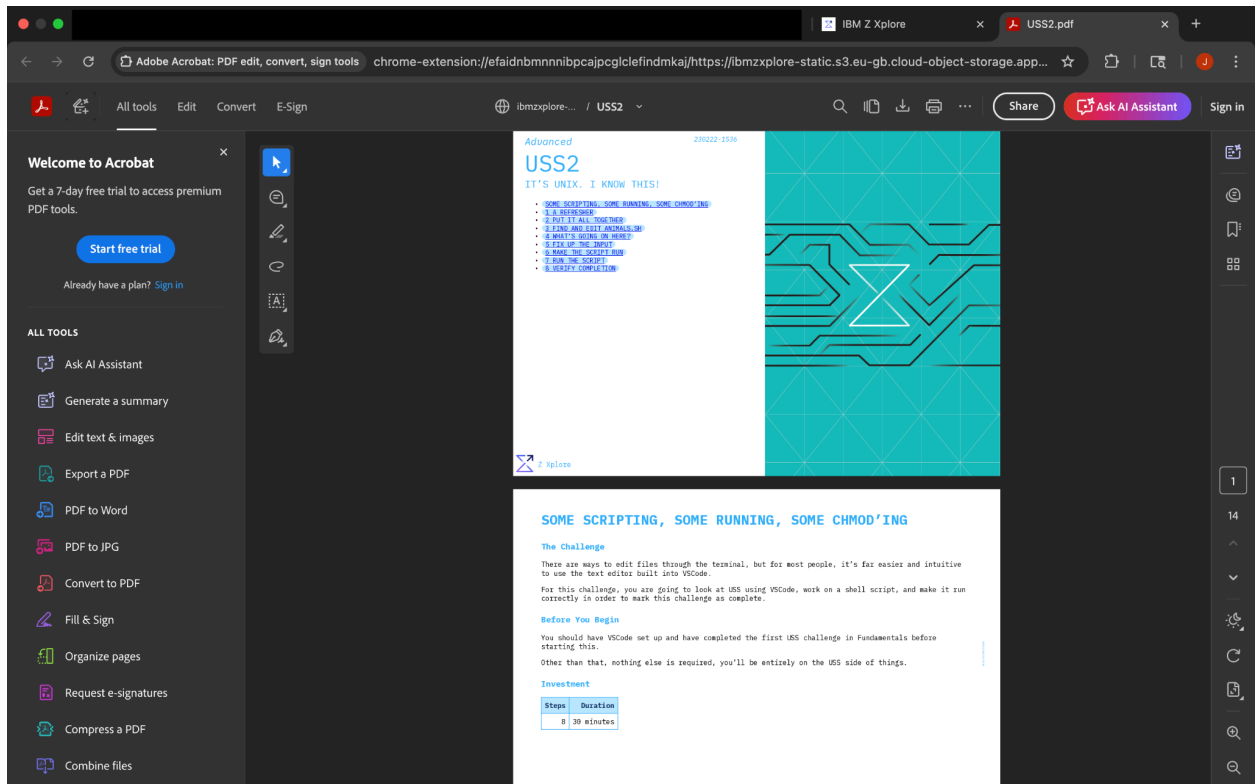
- When you open a challenge, you will find a PDF. It will go over what you are doing and how long you can expect to spend on the challenge. It also gives you precise steps that are easy to follow to guide you through how to do it.

- When you complete a challenge, you submit a JCL file that checks whatever work you have done, and once you get a completion code of 0, the challenge will be marked complete.

- If you don't know what any of that means, that is okay, and Zxplore will teach you all of that and get you all set up with VSCode and Zowe in the first few challenges.

Final Notes

- You do not have to complete every single challenge under a specific tag to earn a badge. You can pick and choose which ones sound appealing to you and do those first.

- The first 2 badges, concepts and advanced, are pretty quick to get. You have to do only around 10 challenges to get those. For the All-Star badge, you have to complete 20 more challenges. Challenges can vary in time from 10 minutes to sometimes upwards of 2 hours.

- All in all, this is a pretty fun way to learn and a very useful resource that teaches you a broad range of things

- You should be all set now to go out and earn your badges!