

You are here: Home / Blogs / CCNP RS – a road traveled



CCNP RS – a road traveled

Quentin Demmon

April 16, 2015

A former colleague who started following the blog asked about the study program used for the CCNP R/S. By the time an email reply was typed up I realized I had a blog post. Since this is fresh on the brain, here's a breakdown.

Important note: I took the previous version of these exams. In fact, the TSHOOT was taken on the very last day it was available in Nashville, TN: 1/29/15. A cursory review of the 2.0 exam topics looks very similar, with some minor changes such as more IPv6. The resources listed in this post already have updated materials.

ORDER OF EXAMS

1. SWITCH
2. ROUTE
3. TSHOOT

Most take the ROUTE exam first, as recommended by the Cisco Press material, but the little rebel in me decided to schedule SWITCH first. Fresh off the CCNA and looking for a confidence-boosting win, the SWITCH seemed to be the right way to go. At the time I had little real world experience with dynamic routing protocols, and a disproportionate amount of time configuring and troubleshooting spanning tree, etherchannels, 802.1q, and some HSRP across vendor-heterogeneous environments. This turned out to be a good decision – SWITCH went very well, providing an octane boost for the ROUTE. Lacking practical experience, ROUTE exam prep had to be shored up with lots and lots and (did I mention) lots of pretend lab work to get comfortable.

Chris Bryant's CCNP Boot Camp (udemy.com)

This was primary source material for both the ROUTE and SWITCH exams. I also purchased the accompanying course books for Amazon Kindle. Not only is the material good, it's very affordable. As a matter of fact, Chris Bryant has heaps of free videos on YouTube. The great thing about the UDEMY course is the ability to download the videos as MP3s. I listened to these over and over in my truck while traveling between client sites, and on my phone while sitting in data centers. Not all the videos work well as audio on a first-listen, but if you've already viewed it once and read the chapters of the book, even these do a good job hammering this stuff into your brain and catching subtle points previously missed.

This boot camp material was primarily in a lecture format. Even in book form, the lectured labs were awkward to try to replicate; something else was needed.

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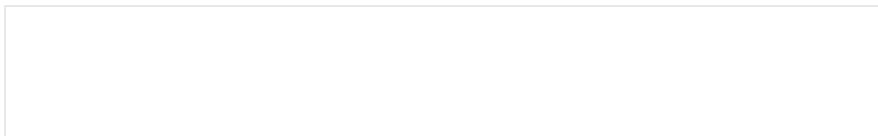
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I purchased the PDF versions of these guides, which are extremely well put together. They're not really textbooks, as the review of principles is very concise, making them perfect for topical review. The real meat, though, is in the labs. They are spot on – so much so that it felt as if the real exam sims had been plucked right out of these guides. If you do these labs over and over until you can perform the configurations by rote, you'll be well on your way.

TSHOOT prep

I separate this from the other two because it's a different animal altogether. You've probably heard that the TSHOOT is fun, and it's true, but certainly not to be taken for granted. While studying for it, I won Cisco's official CCNP TSHOOT book in a drawing at our local Cisco User Group meeting. It's well done and includes a BOSON exam CD with 4 practice trouble tickets. It may be unnecessary, though, as most if not all of those exam scenarios can be found on the Cisco Learning Network or via Google.

GNS3 was used to prepare for all three exams. For the TSHOOT, I'd recommend you build the L2 and L3 topologies (IPv4 and IPv6) as they're provided on the Cisco Learning Network site (or Google it). Don't just download someone else's GNS3 files, either – build it from scratch. Create your own Visio diagrams as well. A senior engineer I work with, [Marcus Battle](#), had suggested this and went a step further. He'd let me bring my laptop in with the working TSHOOT topology – and then break something with my back turned. Each night I had to find the problem and solution. Doing this was key to helping me ace the exam (actually scored a 1000). If you can find someone else who can do this for you, you're golden.



About Quentin Demmon

Comments

melhiore says

April 16, 2015 at 7:37 AM

Used Chris's BootCamp during my switch preparations. Good stuff actually. Going the same root (switch first). Exam on Saturday, we shall see how it goes...

Reply



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Quentin Demmon says



April 16, 2015 at 2:48 PM

Best of luck on it!

Reply

melhiore says



April 16, 2015 at 9:57 PM

Thanks!

Reply

melhiore says



April 23, 2015 at 8:32 AM

Done, really nice exam. Going for another one now...

Reply

Quentin Demmon says



April 23, 2015 at 4:46 PM

Congrats on passing SWITCH! Good luck on ROUTE. The nice thing about ROUTE is being able to do labs almost entirely in GNS3.

Reply

Dmitry Figol says



April 16, 2015 at 11:06 PM

"StackWise, DMVPN and more IPv6"

No DMVPN in CCNP R&S 2.0.

The biggest changes for me were more ipv6 and eigrp named mode.

Reply

Quentin Demmon says



April 17, 2015 at 12:42 AM

Thanks for the feedback, Dmitry, I'll update the post.

Reply

David Fowler says

April 17, 2015 at 1:13 AM

Interesting read Quentin. I'm taking the same order as you with Switch, Route and Tshoot but using INE's CCNP videos. Find them very detailed. Great idea on building your labs and then getting someone else to break them, will try that!

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 19, 2015 at 2:33 AM

I'm using INE for CCIE right now as well, and so far I have been very impressed. And yes, the break fix worked well because my co-worker had taken the exams already and remembered several things that were sneaky. My Twitter account is @quenginerd, looking forward to the follow...

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 19, 2015 at 2:37 AM

Appears the issue was with my Disqus twitter account listing, hope to have that fixed soon, thanks for letting me know about that.

Reply

The FrameRunner says

April 21, 2015 at 3:50 PM

I used the labs on GNS3Vault for practical studying while pairing the "How to Master..." and the Cisco Official Cert Guides for all of the required reading.

Great to hear you had success in attaining CCNP, especially on the last day before the old exams we no longer valid.

How are you finding the INE CCIE package? I picked it up right before the V5 content came out, but haven't spent much time with it lately.

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 22, 2015 at 4:50 AM

I have been impressed with the INE package so far, although i haven't done much with it yet. I plan to cover this in-depth in a future post.

Reply

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