

How I Passed AWS Certified Security Specialty

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It has been a great start to the year. I have achieved my first goal of the year.

Firstly, this is just a short blog and it covers all the aspects for the exam based on my preparation. Please don't consider this article to be the end all and you cannot pass the exam via just reading this article or following in my footsteps. Instead, you need to spend lots of time to do document reading and hands-on practice.

I hope this will help more people to start their journey to the Cloud World. Let's get back to the exam preparation.

The AWS Certified Security Specialty certification is a highly coveted certification that validates your skills and knowledge in securing the AWS platform. The exam is designed to test your ability to implement and manage security controls and compliance frameworks in AWS. In this blog, I will share my experience and tips on how I passed the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam.

1. Understanding the exam format and domains

The first step in passing the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam is to understand the exam format and domains. The exam consists of 65 questions that you need to complete in 170

minutes. The questions are in multiple-choice and multiple-response formats. The exam is divided into five domains, each with a specific weightage:

- Domain 1: Incident Response (12.5%)
- Domain 2: Logging and Monitoring (20%)
- Domain 3: Infrastructure Security (26%)
- Domain 4: Identity and Access Management (20%)
- Domain 5: Data Protection (21.5%)

You need to score well in each domain to pass the exam. To prepare for the exam, you should study and understand the topics covered in each domain.

2. Building a strong foundation

To pass the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam, you need to have a strong foundation in AWS services and security principles. You should be familiar with AWS services such as VPC, IAM, S3, and EC2. You should also have a good understanding of security principles such as confidentiality, integrity, and availability.

AWS provides a lot of resources to help you build your foundation, such as whitepapers, documentation, and videos. You should spend some time going through these resources and understanding the concepts. Some of the recommended whitepapers include:

- AWS Security Best Practices
- AWS Well-Architected Framework — Security Pillar
- Overview of Amazon Web Services
- Architecting for the Cloud: AWS Best Practices

In addition to these resources, you can also attend AWS training courses, which provide in-depth knowledge of AWS services and security principles. Some of the recommended AWS training courses include:

- Security Engineering on AWS
- AWS Security Fundamentals
- AWS Security Operations: Securing Access to AWS

3. Taking an AWS course

After building your foundation, you should take an AWS course that covers the topics in the exam. There are many online courses available, and you can choose one that suits your learning style. I took the AWS Certified Security Specialty course on Udemy. The course covered all the topics that were included in the exam, and it also provided hands-on labs that helped me to reinforce my knowledge.

The course covered the following topics:

- Security and Compliance Overview
- AWS Identity and Access Management (IAM)
- Amazon Virtual Private Cloud (VPC)
- AWS Key Management Service (KMS)
- AWS CloudTrail
- AWS Config
- AWS CloudFormation
- AWS CloudWatch
- AWS Organizations
- AWS Security Hub
- Amazon Inspector
- Amazon GuardDuty
- AWS Certificate Manager (ACM)
- AWS Directory Service
- AWS WAF and AWS Shield
- Amazon Macie
- AWS Secrets Manager

The course also provided practice exams that helped me to understand the exam format and the types of questions that I would encounter.

4. Practice, practice, practice

Practice is the key to passing the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam. AWS provides a lot of practice exams, and you should take as many as you can. I took the official AWS practice exams, as well as practice exams provided by Udemy. These practice exams helped me to understand the exam format and the types of questions that I would encounter.

I also spent some time practicing the hands-on labs provided by AWS. The labs helped me to understand how to implement security controls in AWS and how to troubleshoot issues.

5. Join a study group

Joining a study group can be beneficial when preparing for the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam. A study group can provide you with a support system and motivation, as well as the opportunity to discuss topics and learn from others. You can also ask questions and get feedback from others.

There are many online study groups available, such as LinkedIn groups, AWS groups and forums. You can also create your own study group with friends or colleagues who are also preparing for the exam.

6. Create a study plan

Creating a study plan can help you stay organized and focused when preparing for the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam. A study plan should include the topics that you need to study, the resources that you will use, and the amount of time that you will spend on each topic.

You should also set a target date for taking the exam, which will help you to stay motivated and focused. Make sure that your study plan is realistic and achievable, and that you have enough time to cover all the topics.

7. Take breaks

Taking breaks is very important when preparing for the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam. Studying for long periods of time can lead to burnout, and it can also affect your ability to retain information. I took regular breaks to recharge my mind and avoid burnout.

8. Exam day tips

On the day of the exam, it is important to arrive early and be well-rested. Make sure that you have all the necessary documents, such as your ID and exam confirmation. You should also bring a snack and water, as you will be sitting for a few hours.

During the exam, read the questions carefully and make sure that you understand what is being asked. Eliminate the obviously wrong answers first, and then choose the best answer from the remaining choices. Do not spend too much time on a single question, as you may run out of time.

9. Learn from practice exams

Practice exams are a great way to test your knowledge and identify areas that need improvement. They can also help you get familiar with the exam format and types of questions. I used practice exams from reputable sources, such as the official AWS practice exam, to help me prepare for the real exam.

After taking a practice exam, review your answers and understand why you got each question right or wrong. Use this information to adjust your study plan and focus on areas that you need to improve on.

10. Stay up to date

AWS services and security principles are constantly evolving, so it is important to stay up to date with the latest changes and updates. You can do this by reading AWS documentation, attending webinars, and participating in online forums and communities.

Staying up to date will not only help you pass the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam, but it will also make you a more knowledgeable and valuable asset in your organization.

11. Seek advice from professionals

Seeking advice from professionals who have already passed the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam can be very helpful. They can provide valuable insights into what worked for them and what didn't. You can connect with them through online communities, LinkedIn groups, or even your own professional network.

By talking to professionals who have already passed the exam, you can get an idea of what to expect on the day of the exam, as well as tips on how to prepare and what resources to use.

12. Use AWS services hands-on

One of the best ways to learn about AWS services is by using them hands-on. You can use the AWS Free Tier to create and experiment with AWS services without incurring any charges. By

using AWS services hands-on, you can gain a better understanding of how they work and how they can be used to address security challenges.

You can also create your own projects or work on real-world scenarios to practice your skills and gain practical experience.

In conclusion, passing the AWS Certified Security Specialty exam requires dedication, practice, and a willingness to learn. By following the tips outlined in this blog, you can prepare effectively and increase your chances of passing the exam on your first attempt.

Remember to stay motivated, seek advice from professionals, and use hands-on experience to deepen your understanding of AWS services. With perseverance and a positive attitude, you can become an AWS Certified Security Specialty professional. Good luck!