

# Preparing for Certification

# The Decision to Certify

Since there is literally no downside to certification, it would seem like an easy decision. Yet, only a small percentage of electronic technicians are actually certified. While certification can help with your career, it does require commitment and some work on your part to achieve.

Once you decide to certify, you should devote yourself to the study and preparation necessary to achieve it. That preparation will not only make it possible for you to achieve certifications but it will also make you more knowledgeable, competent, and employable.

# Choosing a Certification Path

You must know your professional goals and interests before selecting a certification to work toward. Many of you already know your specific interests such as computers or wireless or whatever. Select an appropriate certification to match.

If you are still unsure of what fields to pursue, then select one of the generic certifications such as those offered by the ETA-I or ISCET. This will give you an initial credential to help in the hiring process with a path to follow later when you decide upon a specialty.

## Other Certifications

What you will find after you investigate the various certifications is that the requirements are very similar and their exams contain virtually the same electronic fundamentals material. For that reason, once you prepare for one certification you are probably ready for one or more other certifications. If you can afford the extra time and modest cost, then by all means, acquire two or more certifications to help in your job quest and career journey.

# Newcomers to Certification

A good starting point is to acquire either or both of the ISCET or ETA-I generic Associate level certification as well as ComTIA A+. This will give you a good starting point in looking for a job.

Once you get some job experience, you can apply for Journeyman level certification. At that time, you may also have decided upon a specialty. You can then pursue that specialty certification.

# Study the Certification Requirements

After you have selected the certification to pursue, go to the relevant website and print out all of the relevant information. Read and study it carefully.

Make sure you meet all of the requirements with regard to education, experience, and exam preparation.

If you have any questions, call or email the organization to clarify any points of interest.

Submit an application and schedule the exam.

# Acquire Study Materials

Next, acquire the available study materials. Most organizations publish self study manuals and practice exams to prepare people for the exams. These are an absolute must in your preparation.

Arm yourself with some basic textbooks for review and reference. After you start studying, you will find out better what you need.

Check your local bookstore for relevant books. There are tons of computer, software, and networking prep books.

# Advice to New and Expected Graduates

The absolute best time to prepare for certification is just before you graduate from a diploma or AAS degree program in electronics technology. The theory and math are still relatively fresh in your mind and your mind is active with the subject. The longer you are out of school, the more you forget, and the more you will have to relearn or review. Furthermore, it is advantageous to have at least one or two certifications to accompany your diploma or degree listing on your resume before you look for a job.

Some colleges offer short courses that will help prepare you for a certification or the GROL FCC license. Check with your college about this by asking your instructor or department head. Perhaps if enough students are interested in certification, an informal study group can be formed to review the material and learn the new topics.

# Study for the Exam

A good starting point is to take one of the practice exams available for most certifications. This will tell you what you already know and what you need to know. You can greatly shorten your prep time by concentrating on any new or unfamiliar material. If you have difficulty understanding the material, ask an individual who may know and be willing to explain the subject to you and answer questions you have.

Some certifying organizations actually offer or recommend specific training materials including self study courses and instructor lead workshops. These are more expensive but greatly shorten the study time and improve your ability to pass the tests.

# Studying



Set aside a quiet place to read and study each day. Turn off the radio, CD, or TV and concentrate on the subjects of interest. Try to find a time when you will not be interrupted. If you put in an hour a day, you will quickly learn what you need to know.

Once you have studied as much as you think you should, attempt the practice exam. If you still need work, go back to the books. It may be necessary for you to acquire additional books or resources to help you study.

# Take the Exam

Once you feel confident you can pass the exam, sign up through the certifying organization. They schedule exams regularly so you will need to meet their schedule and conditions. You may also have to travel to the exam site if there is not one in your town.

The exams are relatively expensive. They vary from about \$75 to well over several hundred dollars in some cases. So be sure you are ready.

Most of the exams are multiple choice and are given on a computer. All you do is click on the correct answer. Many exams require you to solve problems. Be sure to bring a calculator, scratch paper, and pencil if allowed.

# If You Fail the Exam

Be sure to debrief yourself immediately following the exam.

Write down what you didn't know and those topics you struggled with.

If you fail the exam, most organizations allow you to take the exam multiple times until you pass. It can get expensive, so it is always better to be absolutely sure you can pass it before signing up.

# Using Your Certification

Once you get your certifications, be sure to take advantage of them. It is not a good idea to flaunt them with co-workers who may not have them, but you should make relevant others aware of any certifications. Hanging your framed certificate on the wall of your workspace is one possibility but it may not be the best thing in your organization unless others also do it.

Notify your employer. Just send a memo, note, or email to your supervisor that you have the certification. Also, send a similar note with a copy of your certificates to the Human Resources office for your file.

# Resume

Add the certification to your resume. Be sure to include a line or two describing any certifications or licenses you may have. It is a huge help in getting a job. Be sure to mention the certifications in your cover letter when applying for a job.

When job hunting, look for those jobs asking for or requiring certification.

**Test your knowledge**

**Certification in Electronics Technology  
Knowledge Probe 3  
Preparing for Certification**

Click on **Course Materials** at the top of the page.  
Then choose **Knowledge Probe 3**.

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