

How to Pass the CCNA Exam in 60 Days

The pencil icon below indicates an area where you need to fill in your response.



Introduction

Even though we have never met and I know nothing about you, I do know that if you are reading this, it's because you want to pass your Cisco CCNA exam and you can read English. Knowing this, I can tell you with some confidence that you can pass the exam.

Over the past 10 years, I have helped hundreds of people just like you pass their Cisco CCNA exam. They came from all walks of life as well – builders, gardeners, receptionists, the unemployed, people with several years of IT experience, and people with no IT experience whatsoever, apart from the ability to turn on a PC (and maybe turn it off). In fact, the CCNA exam got me out of a job I no longer loved and into a role with Cisco TAC. I have learned that anybody can pass the CCNA exam or do almost anything, but there is a catch. Would you like to know what it is?

You have to want it bad enough and be prepared to do the work.

No, that's it. We could all be super fit, attain degrees, start a business, or learn conversational Russian – if we really wanted to.

Allow me to tell you about a good friend of mine, Geoff Thompson. Geoff used to work in a factory in my old home town of Coventry in the UK. He worked 12-hour night shifts sweeping up dirt from the factory floor.

He was broke and depressed at the thought of doing the same job for the next 35 years. What he really wanted to be was a writer. Not any old writer, though. He wanted to be a bestselling writer who not only wrote books but also wrote scripts for movies and dramas.

Geoff used to hide in the toilet in the factory and write while he was sitting on the toilet seat. His first book was about his experiences working as a doorman at a terribly violent nightclub situated in Coventry city centre.



Geoff Receiving His BAFTA

Geoff wrote the book by hand and then had his girlfriend and best friend help him type it up on a typewriter so he could submit it to publishers.

Ninety-nine rejection letters later, Geoff still could not find a publisher to take him on. He persisted, though, and eventually a start-up publishing company took a chance with him. His book became a

bestseller, with over 300,000 copies sold, and it has been translated into many languages. It has also been made into a short film. Geoff has been a full-time writer now for the past 10 years and he has authored over 30 books. This allowed him to move out of his rented flat and into a five-bedroom luxury house.

Geoff is now working on scripts with movie directors, and his films are winning awards at film festivals all over the world. Geoff is the first to admit that he isn't anything special. He was plagued with doubts and fears, but he had a big dream and was willing to do the hard work to achieve it. You can learn more about Geoff at www.geoffthompson.com.



I shared Geoff's story because I firmly believe that if you want something, and you have a strong enough reason for doing it and are willing to put the work in, then you can have whatever you want. I can say this with some confidence because this morning, while everyone in my estate was driving off to work, I was at home cuddling my beautiful baby daughter. I fed her and then while my partner went off to meet some fellow new mothers, I sat down to finish this e-book.

In this short guide (or whatever you want to call it), I will tell you how to prepare yourself for the 'Pass the CCNA Exam in 60 Days' challenge. I want you to examine your reasons for wanting to pass the Cisco CCNA exam and ask yourself honestly whether you are willing to do what it takes. Doing the work is going to be pretty easy because I am going to take you by the hand and tell you what to do in minute detail.

There will be no shortcuts or cheats. You are going to learn the material and learn it well enough to pass the CCNA exam, and then apply what you have learned to a Cisco CCNA-level network role.

Vilfredo Pareto and the CCNA Exam

Have you heard of the 80/20 rule? It was introduced by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who found that 20% of effort yielded 80% of the results. This term has now been applied by personal development gurus and pseudo-scientists for many years now. It can be 90/10, 70/30, or whatever.

Looking at Pareto's principle in the context of CCNA studies, you'll find that out of every 100 people who embark upon a CCNA course, only 10% will take the CCNA exam. Read that again! Yes, you may be shocked at that statistic (and it is a real statistic). It doesn't matter if you have paid for a cheap and cheerful home study course, a weekend boot camp, or a two-week intensive course led by the world's top Cisco engineers. It even applies to the world-famous Cisco Networkers Academy (call them and ask for their results).

What I want to know is what are the 10% doing that the 90% are not? I could be flippant and say that the 90% aren't studying, but why not? In the UK, you can pay around \$8000/£4000 for a two-week CCNA course. Why would anyone pay that amount of money (usually on credit cards or with a loan) only to fail the CCNA exam?

Well, let's not worry about the 90% for the moment. Let's work on you being one of the 10%, shall we?

How Bad Do You Want It?

I mentioned the fact that if you want something bad enough, you can have it. So long as the thing you want is achievable, then it can be done. I am probably about to annoy you but hopefully I am far enough away from you so you can't hit me. I am going to tell you the reason you have not passed the CCNA exam so far, if you have wanted to pass it for some time now, that is. The reason you have not passed it yet is because you don't want to.

Did that annoy you? It probably did. It annoyed me when I met a successful businessman a few years ago who told me I had not started my own company yet because I didn't want to. I had been telling him that it was a bad time, I was busy, I didn't have any money or experience, I hadn't decided what sort of business I wanted to run yet, I hadn't written a business plan...and so on and so forth. I had all the excuses.



The truth is that I didn't actually start my first company until the boss of our company walked in and told all 42 of us that we were out of a job in 90 days. To make matters worse, the redundancy pay covered only half my monthly rent. All of a sudden, my excuses went out of the window and I took massive action. I still had no business plan or idea of what I wanted to do or how to do it, but I started anyway and learned as I went along.

Perhaps I can save you a lot of time now. I want you to take a few seconds and honestly ask yourself how badly you want to pass your CCNA exam. Search inside yourself and think of a number from 1 to 10 and circle it. Please do this now.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Here is the time saver. If you circled 7 or less, then don't bother picking up the books or going any further with this e-book or your CCNA studies at the moment. No, seriously, it is not possible to pass the CCNA exam with a half-hearted attitude. Unless you are some sort of savant or have a photographic memory, you will never pass. You will be one of the millions of people who each year embark upon a course of study and are doomed to fail.

Such people experience a moment of temporary excitement and order a set of books or book on a course on the Internet, but they never complete it. The books sit on the shelves or the membership starts, runs, and then expires. Why do you think all gyms now get you to sign up for at least 12 months on direct debit? They know that they will have a massive influx of members in the new year when people make resolutions, or leading up to summer when they know people will be on the beach taking off their t-shirts. After a month or two, 90% have stopped attending.

By the way, don't for a minute think that I am anything special. On my office shelf in front of me I have my *Learn Chinese* book staring at me, taunting me to pick it up. I have bought the best e-book on losing

fat and gaining muscle ever written, and I have read it back to front six times and have made extensive notes. I just haven't tried doing any of the workouts or following the eating plans yet. Maybe next week, eh?

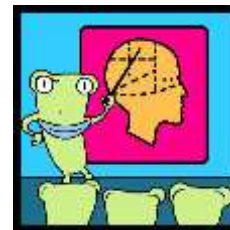
Ah, but give me my website www.howtonetwork.com and I will work on it from five in the morning until two the next morning. I will write articles and hire programmers to write cool study tools for it. I will take financial risks to help it grow, and I will phone strangers out of the blue to tell them about the site.

Do you want to know why I will do that but struggle to pick up a set of weights or eat a salad?

How Your Mind Works

As a species, we will always move towards pleasure and move away from pain. Yes, yes, I know I am stating the obvious, but bear with me because there is more to this than meets the eye.

The reason we avoid things we do not like is because when we think of them we think of pain. When I think about going for a run, I think of pain, and when I think about eating a pizza, I think about pleasure. This is a self-made neurological map in my brain, which I could in fact change.



If I imagined having a fit and healthy body every time I thought about going for a run, it would feel pleasurable and my pituitary gland would secrete endorphins, which would bond with cell receptors in my body, causing me to feel good.

If, every time I thought about pizza, I imaged a spare tyre of fat building round my midsection, causing my trousers to feel even tighter, my adrenal gland would release cortisol, causing me to feel awful. I would eat a salad then.

Of course, this isn't about pizza, is it? It is about changing how you perceive sitting down for two hours per day reading books and configuring Cisco routers and switches. And, of course, finally taking ownership for getting yourself through the Cisco CCNA exam.

Future Pacing

I am going to have to be tough on you now, my friend. Consider me that friend who has to give you kind but firm advice because you have been neglecting yourself for a while. You know he is a real friend if he tells you how he really feels.

I want you to pass your CCNA exam. No, I REALLY want you to pass it. I want you to feel proud of yourself and I want to celebrate your achievement with you. I could have picked any business, you know – project management, Internet marketing seminars, personal training, become a lawyer, or any number of other roles. I run a Cisco training business because I really love helping people like you achieve what you want out of your lives, using Cisco qualifications to allow that to happen.

When I was in the police force, I felt like I was helping people, but the paperwork and politics were dreadful. Every night, I was rolling around on the pavement, fighting with crack addicts who I knew

would never be sent to prison because the prisons were too full. Every time we put somebody inside, we had to let somebody out early.



Here's a scenario for you. You walk into a car showroom just to have a look at your favourite model of car. You know, the one you've been dreaming of buying when you win the lottery. As you sit in the car, you grasp the steering wheel firmly and feel the top-quality leather hug your body in just the right places.

The salesman spots his quarry (you) and before you know it, he is standing next to you, pretending to be your friend (as salesmen do) and asking you lots of questions about why you love this car. At some point, if he is a good salesman, he may say something like 'Can you imagine yourself driving down the road in this car?'

He has just future paced you. Future pacing involves putting your mind into the future, where some sort of scenario has played or is playing out. We all spend a lot of time with our minds bouncing between the past and the future, possibly feeling bad about things we said or did in the past (so we get to feel guilty all over again), or maybe worrying about the future (such as our finances, the supposed recession, or the next hurricane).

Now I want to future pace you. Not to sell you anything, well at least not anything you can buy. I want you to sell the CCNA to yourself.

Imagine sitting at the testing desk at your local Cisco testing centre. You click on the last question and a bar comes up on the screen. It tells you that you have achieved a great mark on your exam and you have passed. You are now a CCNA.

WOW! All that hard work, the hours of studying, the sacrifices have all been worth it. You get an interim certificate stamped before you leave and walk out into the open, feeling the warm sunshine on your face. Only 90 minutes earlier you had walked in feeling tense and nervous, wondering if you had done enough studying. If only I had done one more practise exam, you were thinking to yourself.

Once you learn to master your mind, you can master your destiny. I know it sounds all very Tony Robbins, but he is the guy living in a castle, flying a helicopter, and married to a model, so he must be doing something right. Right?

Grab your pen or pencil and answer the questions below.



How will you feel when you pass the CCNA exam? Where will you feel it?

What will it prove to you about yourself when you pass the CCNA exam?

Who will you tell when you pass it and what will they say to you?

What will your work colleagues and boss think? Will it earn you more respect at work, and whom will it help to inspire?

What differences will being a CCNA make to your life?

What opportunities will open for you now that you are a CCNA?

When I was studying, I knew I was going to pass. Maybe not the first time, but I knew I was going to be a CCNA because I couldn't imagine not being one! I was absolutely desperate to pass. I imagined being back home with my family, and I imagined doing a networking job, which is what I really wanted to do at the time. I imagined walking into work and sending out an e-mail to all my colleagues saying I was buying the cakes because I had passed my CCNA exam.

Please refer to the list above **every day** as you study for the CCNA exam. Without a strong reason to want to pass, you will find yourself being distracted or feeling unmotivated.

There is another ingredient you need to complete the enthusiasm pie: responsibility.

Whose Fault Is It Anyway?

Here is an extract from an e-mail I received this week:

'Hi Paul, I'm finding studying hard. I have a ton of decorating to do at home, I have to drive to work and back every day, there are lots of projects on at work at the moment, and I have to work extra hours and some weekends. My boss doesn't even pay me overtime.'

I have this same e-mail every week from a different student. I swear that it must be a template passed around.

One fact I have found while running my own company, speaking to over a thousand students and trying to promote my company to hundreds of IT managers, is that everyone thinks they are busier than everyone else, and they only think about themselves (myself included). I hear it time and time again: 'I'm really busy at the moment, I have so much going on, and I'm fire fighting...'

I recently e-mailed a website owner with a view to doing some business together. The first line in his e-mail response was 'I'm a very busy person.' I felt like writing back, 'Oh, so it is YOU who is the busy person. I was wondering who it was. The rest of us sit around all day long doing nothing. What's it like to be so busy?'

People wear their 'busyness' like some sort of badge of honour. Just because they are working flat out all day long and feel like they have no free time does not mean they are busy. It means they don't know how to say 'no' to others, they are not planning their time, and they are not prioritising their tasks correctly.

Here's a famous story to illustrate what I mean. A man walking along a country lane sees another man chopping down a tree. This man had quite a lot of experience in felling trees and could clearly see that the axe needed to be sharpened. If it was, then the chopping time could be reduced from three hours to only an hour. He shouted over to the man chopping down the tree, 'Hey, why not sharpen that axe so you can chop down the tree faster?' The man stopped, wiped his brow of sweat, and shouted back, 'I don't have time to sharpen the axe because I'm too busy chopping down this tree!'

While I do not mean to sound unsympathetic to busy people, I'm afraid we all have the same 24 hours in the day. Richard Branson, Donald Trump, Bill Gates, me, and, most importantly, you.

The truth is that in my entire life I have never heard a successful person say the phrase 'I'm too busy.' People may tell me that they have several projects they are working on at the moment and do not want to take on another one, but that is very different from saying 'I'm too busy.'



Saying that you are 'too busy' is taking responsibility for your life away from yourself and handing it over to your boss, wife, family, traffic, teachers, or whomever. I'm convinced that 'busyness' is a disease sweeping society at the moment and it is getting worse. In an age when we have more convenience than ever before, and more timesaving devices, we are becoming more and more time broke.

I hate to rant but 'I'm busy' will cripple your ability to pass the CCNA exam. Only this week I had yet another e-mail from a student who came on my CCNA course two years ago and who has not taken the exam yet because he has been 'too busy.' He told me the same thing two years ago when I called him a week after the course to see how his studying was progressing.

Since that time, Cisco has introduced SDM, wireless, security, IPv6, and lots of other things to the CCNA certification, so it is going to be even harder for him to pass. The boss who is giving this guy more work than he can handle is the same boss who will be making him redundant (with no qualifications) in a few weeks. He could have passed two years ago and got a nice networking role for more money and less overtime, with an extra \$20,000 in the bank and an extra two hours per day with his family.

So what is my point? Here it is: When all is said and done, who is responsible for your success or failure in any endeavour?



Wife/Husband/Partner

Kids

Boss

Fate

Don't know

Not me

Me

Any answer other than 'me' renders you powerless.

On Change



I can tell you in a few seconds whether you are going to pass the CCNA exam by looking in your diary. If there isn't one to two hours in there every day for studying, then you will not pass. There are no shortcuts or secrets to success. You put in two hours for about 60 days and you pass. It is how I passed and how almost everyone else passes.

Remember that I have been coaching CCNA students for several years now. I don't just teach my students and throw them out the door. They are all given study tools, exam strategies, cram guides, lab walkthroughs, and lots of other stuff. The sad truth is that many walk out of the door and do the same exact thing that they have done for weeks, months, and years before they came on the course: nothing.

Change is painful and change is difficult. This is why we do the same thing every day, like put a sock on the same foot first, sleep on the same side of the bed, park in the same space, eat the same meal at the same restaurant, and so on. To break the change we need a very strong reason for doing so, which gives us the motivation to go through with it.

Summer 2000

During the summer of 2000, I had left behind my career in the police force to pursue a career in IT. I was living in a tiny room in a house shared with three other IT helpdesk guys in a town called Reading. I was miles away from my wife and daughter, who I missed desperately. I was the oldest person on the helpdesk by several years, and I was desperately broke because I had taken a massive pay cut from my police salary.

Passing the CCNA exam was my ticket out of the helpdesk job and into a company closer to home, working with a network team and making good money.

How desperate, on a scale of 1 to 10, was I to pass the CCNA exam? If you guessed 10, you would be right. There was no way I could not pass it. I got up at 5:30 every morning and studied subnetting for two hours. I walked to work and during my lunch break studied for an hour. After work, I went back to my room and studied for another two hours.

I did this for six weeks and then I failed the exam. I was devastated but I was also desperate. I took it again two weeks later. The rest is history.

Here was the pain I was in. If I didn't pass, I was probably going to lose my house because I couldn't afford both my mortgage and rent for the room. I was missing my family. I was doing an insanely boring job with idiot salespeople screaming at me down the phone because they were too stupid to backup their documents and now their hard drive had crashed.

Here was the pleasure. Passing meant more money so I could afford to live with and support my family. It meant I could leave the helpdesk and get an exciting job in networking, which I felt really passionate about. It meant I could move back home and be with the people I loved.

Now let's start with the first exercise. Please don't just read this and put it off until later. There is no later. **Do it now.**

These questions may sound similar but they are different. That is, they are designed to access different parts of your neurology.



What will happen for you if you pass the CCNA exam?

What will happen for you if you don't pass the CCNA exam?

What won't happen for you if you don't pass the CCNA exam?

What won't happen for you if you do pass the CCNA exam?

Based upon your answers above, do you feel motivated (i.e., scoring 8 or above) to pass the CCNA exam?

Yes / No

By the way, if you read this and decide that you don't really want to pass it at the moment, that is fine. I'm not judging you. Live the life you want to live and be happy with your own choices. Maybe now is a bad time and you should leave studying until later.

Another Story

Here is a story of a student who passed his CCNA exam. He booked on my CCNA course and then started to e-mail me questions as soon as his book arrived. He wanted to know which routers he needed to buy and then he was asking for clarification about certain parts of my CCNA study guide, *Cisco CCNA Simplified*.

He wanted to know whether it was enough to read the book over three times before coming on the course or whether he should read it a few more times. He was tight for time because he had to get up at 5:00 every morning to get to his factory job. He did 10-hour shifts and then worked in a bar to make extra money to send home to his family.

He would get home at midnight, study for two hours, and then get up for work again at 5 A.M. The best of it was that I never heard him complain that he was busy! He just got on with the job and did what he knew he had to do.

When he arrived on the course, he was the only student out of eight to have read the manual. The others, who were doing 8-hour workdays, said they had been far too busy to read it.

Three weeks after the course, this student had passed and the other seven hadn't. I still keep in touch with them all and from the other seven it is the same thing: busy at work, no time, have to mow the lawn, (insert more excuses here).

Time Stealers

So back to our 24 hours in the day. I'm guessing most of the time you have the same structure to your day, something like this:

Get up

Wash

Breakfast

Travel to work

Work

Break

Work

Travel home

Gym/Eat/TV/Family/Leisure

Sleep

Repeat until fade...

By the weekend, you may be tired, so you just want to relax and switch off. And who can blame you? After all, you have earned the rest because you worked hard. Well, actually the definition of hard work has changed over the years. It has gone from working 12-hour shifts down a coal shaft or picking cotton in a field for 14 hours to sitting on our butts at a desk for nine hours.

I know which one I would rather do. Now, instead of being physically exhausted at the end of the day, we are just mentally drained.

In your schedule, you have things you have to do and things you choose to do. The things you have to do may include the following:



Sleep

Travel to/from work

Eat

Look after your children

Work

The rest may have a certain degree of flexibility. You may even be able to fit in a little bit of study time during your working day if your job allows it. Here are the things you may be able to allocate study time to instead:

Gym/Eat/TV/Family/Leisure

Break

If you take away

Sleep – 8 hours

Travel – 1 to 2 hours

Work – 8 hours

you are left with only a measly six hours during the day with which to allocate your study time. You may really want to spend some of that time with your family, at the gym, or doing something else.

One guy told me he simply didn't have the time to study. None, nada, not one minute. When I asked him whether he would be able to find the time if he was going to be given one million dollars when he passed the CCNA exam, he thought about it for a few seconds and said, 'Of course I would!'

Right. So the problem wasn't the lack of time, was it? He didn't think it was a priority to study and he did other things instead. If I had followed him for a few days, I absolutely guarantee you that this guy would be watching TV for at least two hours per day. He would also be spending time at work chatting to colleagues and surfing the web, and would probably sleep on the train home.

Let me ask you something. If it was only for two months, what things do you think you could either cut out altogether or cut down on so you could study and pass the CCNA exam?

Leisure

Time with friends

TV

Relatives

Fitness

Surfing the web

Reading books/newspapers

If you were going to be paid \$1 million when you passed, what things could you stop doing, or at least cut down on, for two months? Write a list now:



The best way to fit in your study time is to study at the same time every day. I like to do it early in the morning while everyone else is asleep and the phone will not ring. You might like to do it late at night. You MUST diary in the time. If you tell yourself you will study when you have the time during the day, you will not study. I have done that with my workouts for months before I realised I wasn't having any workouts.

Here is a suggestion I gave to a student named Mike. He felt overwhelmed with his schedule, and after two years with the books on his shelves, he still had not gotten round to taking the CCNA exam.

After a while, I realised that he was never going to pass because he never put in any study time. He wanted to but he couldn't see where on Earth he was going to fit it in. Here was his daily schedule:

07:00	Wash/eat/leave home	
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08:30	Start work	
13:00	Lunch at desk	No time for a break
18:00	Leave for home	Hit rush-hour traffic
19:30	Eat/family time	
20:30	Fall asleep in front of TV	
23:00	Fall into bed	

Mike's life was in a bit of a mess. He was rushing around at work and home and he felt time deprived. His diet was in a mess, he rushed out to work, he never took a work break, and he stayed late. By the time he got home, he was starving and irritable. The last thing he felt like doing was cramming in two hours of studying every day.

With a few simple ideas, we managed to turn his day around. I got Mike to try finishing work on time for a change first. The first time he went to leave, he was shot some strange looks, but he just explained that his wife was not very well and he had to get home to help with the kids. He left on time for the rest of the week, in fact, and people stopped asking why he was leaving on time. They just came to expect it.

Next, I got him to prepare a meal for work the night before. He packed some nice wholemeal sandwiches, fruit, and a flapjack for when he felt hungry. Now, instead of trying to work all day without food or rushing downstairs for a McDonald's, he felt he had energy to last the entire day. He also took the novel step of drinking water throughout the day and immediately his energy levels rose.

Mike also began to take a 15-minute coffee break in the morning and a full lunch break. He felt he deserved it since he worked hard all day long. He actually started to get far more done at work because he had more energy. During his lunch break, he began to study from his Cisco books.

Because he had more energy, he woke up earlier in the morning and began to study. He set his alarm but woke up before it, most days anyway. He spent an hour doing a couple of hands on Cisco labs, which he really enjoyed.

Best of all, Mike began to feel more in control of his life. By the time he got home (on time), he felt very energetic and awake. He got to spend quality time with his wife and children. By the time the children went to bed, he had time for one last study session. His wife was okay with that because she understood that when he passed the CCNA exam, he would be looking for a better-paid job closer to home. He was even talking about starting his own business, which was his dream.

Mike went to bed at 10 P.M., just after he had made his lunch for the next day. He didn't worry about his study plan for the next day. He knew he could tackle the next day's tasks because they were sitting in his e-mail inbox courtesy of the 'Pass Your CCNA in 60 Days' programme (Note – we no longer do the course via e-mail).

Here was Mike's new schedule:

06:00	Up and study	1 hour of studying
07:00	Wash/eat/leave home	Listen to CCNA audio in the car
08:30	Start work	WORK TIME
10:30	Coffee break	Cram guide for 15 minutes
13:00	Lunch	45 minutes of studying
17:00	Leave for home	Listen to CCNA audio
18:30	Eat/family time	FAMILY TIME
20:00	Study	45 minutes of studying
20:45	Time with wife	WIFE TIME
22:00	Off to bed	REST TIME

If you had told Mike that he could fit in two hours of study time every day, he would have laughed at you. Now, he is not only studying for more than two hours every day, he is also happier and healthier than ever before.

The best thing, though, is that when he passes the CCNA exam, he will have an extra 8 to 10 hours free every week to spend with his family, to go to the gym, or to take another certification exam.

Goal Setting 101

Don't tell me that you don't set goals because you do. You set a goal to read this e-book and you are doing just that. Your brain is a goal-seeking organism. It needs and wants goals. Goals help us grow.

The problem is that our brains are bored because we set the same old tired goals every day of every week – get to work on time, try to finish on time, make our money last until the next pay day, and so on.



If you want to pass the CCNA exam, you will want to make that your number one goal, which will be easy if you don't have any other goals.

Here is how I recommend you do it:

Step 1 – Ask yourself, 'Is this something that I really want to do?' You may be reading this and thinking to yourself, 'I don't want to be a CCNA after all.'

If you feel excited about passing the CCNA exam, then you know you are doing the right thing. I only say this because I have set a lot of goals but have never achieved them. One was having a six pack. The truth is that I am not really that bothered about not having one. So long as I am fit and healthy and doing my workouts, I like that. In the UK it is almost always raining, so when am I going to get to take off my t-shirt anyway?



Step 2 – Are you willing to do the work? Two hours per day for 60 days. Be honest with yourself. Are you going to do it or not? There is no 'let's see how I get on' or 'I'll try my best.' Rubbish! You are going to do it or not, and you already know what your answer is. If you are feeling excited in the pit of your stomach, you know you are going to do it.

Step 3 – Are you willing to follow a step-by-step study programme? I have actually done most of the hard work for you already. All you have to do is do what I say when I say to do it. If I tell you to do an access list video, don't go and watch a movie or call a friend for a chat!

Step 4 – Take one day at a time. Leave tomorrow for tomorrow. Open up today's study e-mail and do the tasks I sent you for the day.

Goal Warning

I had better warn you now that when you set a goal you will also encounter one or more challenges along the way. These are designed to divert you from achieving your goal. I don't know what these challenges will be, but they will come. It may be a big project at work where you are asked to work late, a family illness, invitations out to events, or friends calling you to invite you out to that movie you have been looking forward to for months.

Because every circumstance is different, I can't advise or tell you what you should do in response to these challenges. All I can tell you is that once you set the goal, you can expect some kind of challenges along the way. Your choice is to avoid, deal with, or delay dealing with that challenge and then move on with your studies.

If you have to deal with it then do so, and as quickly as possible, get back on track with your studies. Pick up where you left off and keep going.

Affirmations

Do this and don't argue with me. Get a few small blank cards (postcard-sized) and your pen.



Write this on the first card:

'I really enjoy studying for my Cisco CCNA certification two hours per day. I am learning new things and proving to myself that I am disciplined and that I am the master of my own destiny.'

Write this on the next card:

'It is [insert your exam date here] and I feel so happy that I passed my Cisco CCNA exam with ease.'

Write this on the next card:

'I easily make time to study for my CCNA certification every day, and the old things which used to interrupt my day no longer happen anymore. It's amazing!'

Write this on the next card:

'Passing the CCNA exam is my number one goal. Nothing or no one is going to stop me.'

Read the cards three times per day – when you get up, in the afternoon, and before going to sleep. It will program your mind for success. It will become part of your subconscious that passing the CCNA exam is inevitable. You will also find you have more time and actually look forward to your study sessions. Studying will become a part of who you are.

Does it work? The week I started to use the affirmation 'I easily make \$30,000 per month' I started to make that and more. Proof enough?

The Buy-in

If you are in a relationship, you are usually expected to invest time into it (if you want it to last, that is). A particular problem many male students have is that their partner will want to spend quality time with them at the end of the day, which, of course, is a reasonable request.

If you cannot fit two hours of studying into your day before you get home from work, then you are going to have to do it at home or get home late. If this is the case, you are going to need your partner's and your children's buy-in. If they do not understand why you are hidden in your spare room for hours every day, then they are going to resent it and possibly you as well.

Take some time to write a list of people who expect to spend quality time with you most evenings. When you have written the list, then write another list of reasons it is important to you that you pass the CCNA exam and how it will benefit them. For example, if it is your wife/husband or partner, he/she needs to know that having the CCNA qualification will mean a pay rise, another job closer to home, contracting and working four days per week, or whatever else will happen for you.

You will also need to plan a family treat for when you pass. Put a picture of the treat on your refrigerator and remind the family of it constantly. Eventually, your partner and children will be telling you to go into your room and study because they want the treat.



List the people whose buy-in you need.

Write out what you are going to tell them to get their buy-in.

Please take some time to explain that it is only for two months and that you will not be studying all night and day, just for two hours a day.

Study Instructions

It is vital that you have two hours of quality study time every day. Fitting small bits in at work when the boss isn't there or while sitting in a coffee shop is fine, but quality study time with no interruptions is what you need.

Here is what I would like you to do to prepare for your study periods:

- Turn your mobile phone off.
- Unplug your home phone or send it to voicemail.
- Turn off your e-mail program.
- Tell colleagues, friends, or your children and partner not to interrupt you for two hours.
- Check your start time and mark your finish time.
- Study away from distractions, such as noise or outside-facing windows.
- Take a 10-minute break every hour to rest your mind.

You will have a study plan to follow telling you exactly what you need to do for your study period as part of the 'Pass Your CCNA Exam in 60 Days' programme.

Dealing with Time Stealers

I'm afraid that there are many people who think they are entitled to take as much of your time as they wish. Because you are being paid at work, then of course you belong to them, I'm afraid, but at the end of your work day, your time is your own.

Most people I meet tell me that they work longer hours at work for no extra pay because it is expected of them. Well, that has to change if you want to pass the CCNA exam. I've only experienced this with IT people, but there seems to be some sort of unwritten rule that says if you leave work at the end of the day, you are betraying or have no commitment to the company. In the police force, we were always paid when we worked overtime.



I remember my first day working at Cisco, from 9 to 5. I got up to leave at 5:00 and the team leader asked me where the hell I was going. I told him I was going home to see my wife and family and I left. If I had stayed for free, it would have educated him to expect me to stay for free for the 'love of the

job.' But that love was not reciprocated when they made 42 of us redundant and outsourced our jobs to India!

While others were working up to two hours per day for free, I was studying. When we were all made redundant, I was the one with the qualifications and they had nothing to show for their work. Nobody had even thanked them for all the days of extra work they had done. It was just expected.

People work longer hours for free usually out of fear – fear of criticism by their peers or boss. That is the very thing that locks people into a job for years. If you want to pass the CCNA exam, you are going to have to be brave and leave at the end of your workday.

If you are struggling to do that then it is either a courage issue or boundaries, and that needs working on. You can read an excellent book called *Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend for more information, but I strongly encourage you to finish work on time and invest time in your personal development.

Friends and family can also be huge time stealers. I spoke to one student who said that he was constantly called by friends with computer problems who wanted free tech support. He was on the phone for up to two hours at a time helping friends install their broadband or recover lost files.

If you want to pass then you are going to have to get tough with time stealers. Those friends did not value that student's time, and in fact, they came to expect free tech support. Never mind the years it took this guy to learn PC assembly and troubleshooting or the two thousand bucks he spent on the course. This guy's friends were classic time stealers.

While I am not saying we shouldn't help our friends, I am saying that we should put ourselves first. What that student should do is start a small business and charge a special rate for his friends. He would then recover some of his learning costs and his friends would come to appreciate his time and efforts.

If this is a struggle for you, read the book *When I Say No I Feel Guilty*.

The Next Steps

For now, make sure you have access to Cisco routers and switches, a good quality study guide (such as *Cisco CCNA in 60 Days* – authored by Farai and me), and a cram guide and you have set aside your study time, preferably every day.

I hope that this short document has helped you in some way. If it has worked then you are clear on why you want to pass the CCNA exam, you have got the buy-in of the people you need to support you, and you are focused on passing.

If it doesn't happen to you then I hope you are strong enough to take responsibility for your own situation in life. If you didn't take the exam, it was you who didn't book it, it was you who didn't say no to time stealers, and it was you who didn't do the work. As Wayne Dyer says, 'All blame is a waste of time.'

If you pass then I salute you. Welcome to the top 10% of the population who set the goal, did the work, and won the prize. You have earned it. Please let me know when you do pass and send over a photograph so you can be inducted into the CCNA Hall of Fame. You are a winner!

