

CompTIA PenTest+ (PTO-003) Study Plan

Purpose

This study plan contains general study tips, an overview of how to create and use flashcards effectively, other study tools, a suggested 30-day study plan, and a suggested 60-day study plan.

The purpose is to provide students with some general information and a general plan that they can adapt to fit their own learning goals.

General Study Tips

- **Studying and learning are very individualistic.**
 - Not everything works for everybody. Find the tools, methods, and strategies that work for you.

- **The average person has an attention span of 20-30 minutes.**
 - Once you have reached the limit of your attention on a task, you should do something else for a while.
 - Any time you spend studying beyond your attention span is generally wasted time because the studying will become increasingly inefficient.
 - The key to maintaining attention is to divide work into different tasks and alternate types of tasks. For example, you can watch videos for 20 minutes, then review notes for 10 minutes, then work on learning tools for 15 minutes, then

get up and move around for 15 minutes before returning to videos. You can also alternate watching videos with another task like working on learning tools.

- **Be realistic and learn how you learn.**
 - If you have a shorter attention span, then set your study time accordingly. Try some different time spans and activities and see what works. If, for example, sitting still makes you lose focus quickly, try to engage in some activity such as following along with the closed captions, taking notes, or even walking around as you watch the video.
 - If a strategy or tool isn't working after a few days of trying it, change to it. Learning how you learn is mainly the result of trial and error.

- **Once you have the plan set, establish small rewards for following the plan.**
 - This could be 30 minutes of uninterrupted video game time, a food or drink treat, or anything else that will motivate you to stick to the plan. The reward is just for following through on the plan for that day, not for getting a particular score on a practice exam or a quiz.

- **Find the balance between strictly following the plan you created and extreme flexibility.**
 - Strictly following a plan that isn't working or is too ambitious will create anxiety and you will lose motivation. If the 30 day plan is creating too much anxiety, you can switch to the 60 day plan, or modify it so it fits with your learning style.
 - Being extremely flexible, for example, constantly changing the plan, will cause you to lose focus and lose motivation.



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- **Don't beat yourself up over a perceived failure.**
 - This includes not sticking to the plan, failing a quiz, or failing a practice exam. Instead think about the factors that may have led to the perceived failure.
 - If the factor is something in your control, change it. For example, if you planned on studying for an hour and lost focus after 30 minutes, change up the plan to make it work for your attention span. If studying during your lunch break was interrupted by people talking in your lunch space, change the lunch space or schedule your studying for another time.
 - If the factor is not in your control, ignore it. Life happens and feeling badly about things beyond your control isn't helpful.

How to Use the Videos Effectively

- **As you watch the videos:**
 - Add notes to the study guide.
 - Highlight terms and concepts you want to make flashcards for.
 - Mark terms or sections based on how well you understand them.
 - Put question marks next to any concepts you want to do more research on.

- **After you watch a section:**
 - Reread the study guide and the notes you have made to ensure you understand what you wrote while the material is still fresh in your mind.
 - Create flashcards or study tools.
 - Review the previous day's flashcards or study tools.

How to Use the Practice Exams Effectively

- **While taking the practice exams:**
 - Follow the tips from the Course's Conclusion video.
 - Do a brain dump (write down everything you can remember) when you begin the practice exam to practice the process and to see whether it will be helpful to you.

- **After you take a practice exam:**
 - Review the questions that you got incorrect.
 - Read the explanation.
 - Add to your flashcards or study tools and to your study guide.
 - Review the brain dump you created and evaluate whether you should make changes to it.
 - Make a list of the objectives for the questions that you got correct and those you got incorrect. Using a tracking chart like the one below will help you see trends.

Practice Exam Number	Objectives of Correct Answers	Objectives of incorrect Answers
#1		

How to Make Retaking the Exam an Effective Learning Tool

- **When you retake the exam:**
 - When you read a question that you remember, take a moment and think through why the correct answer is correct instead of just clicking on the remembered correct answer.

- **After you retake the exam:**
 - Review the questions that you got incorrect.
 - Read the explanation.
 - Add to your flashcards or study tools and to your study guide.
 - Review the brain dump you created and evaluate whether you should make changes to it.
 - Add the retake to the tracking chart.

How to Use Flashcards Effectively

Flashcards can be a very effective learning tool if they are set up correctly and used correctly and consistently. In general, there are two types of flashcards: Written and Apps. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Written Flashcards

- **Writing is an effective way to create memories.** Writing your own flashcards will help you to remember material even if you don't use the flashcards later.
- **Set up your flashcards consistently.** For example, use the lined side of the card for definitions and the blank side for terms. Visual clues (like lines) often work in our subconscious to help us remember.
- **Use colored flashcards to distinguish different parts of content.** For example, use pink cards for learning ports and protocols. This creates a visual clue and helps you associate the term with the content that it falls under.
- **Consider drawing pictures and diagrams on the cards.**
- **Sort your flashcards into stacks.** When you go through the flashcards, sort them into stacks based on how confident you are that you know the material or how much time it takes you to think of the answer. See if you can get all of the cards into the stack that represents that you know the answers.

- Example stacks for how long it took you to think of the answer
 - Knew it right away
 - Had to think for a moment
 - Had to think for a while
 - Had to look at the answer

Flashcard Apps

- **There are many flashcard apps available.** Most are free or low cost. They often contain games or methods of going through the cards that are designed specifically to make your studying more efficient. They also prevent you from just thinking “I know that” and moving on by requiring you to perform a task to prove you know it.
- **Some apps offer ready made stacks that have been created by other students.** While this may seem like a quick alternative, many of these stacks are not set up well and may contain errors. Making your own is a more reliable way to ensure the quality of the set up and content.
- **The most important part of the set up for flashcard apps is consistency.** Generally, you should have short answers and longer definitions, descriptions, or questions. Be sure that the answers are consistently on one side of the card.
 - This becomes important when using apps that have you type the answer, which is the best way to determine if you know the correct answer. Shorter answers will allow you to type the answer more effectively and quickly. If the answer is a sentence or longer phrase you won't be able to remember the exact words in the answer and you will be marked wrong even when your answer was really

correct.

- Flashcard apps like **Quizlet** and **Anki** have modes that help you learn content by first setting up multiple choice questions and then fill in the blank questions. This is based on research into memory and how to create it.
- **Brainscape** uses a confidence measure to sort cards into stacks similar to how you would use written flashcards. This can be very effective as long as you are honest in your confidence ranking.
- **Some apps allow you to create lists in word processing programs and then import them into the program.** This is very handy and makes creating the cards faster and more consistent. Normally you type the answer, then tab and write the question. You copy and paste the whole page of answers and questions into the app.

Other Study Tools/Methods

- Using the exam objectives and turning them into questions can be a powerful way to figure out what areas you need to work harder on.
 - **Objective 5.5:** Explain types and purposes of audits and assessments.
 - **Term:** Attestation
 - **Question:** What is the purpose of attestation?
- **ChatGPT** offers a way to check your learning. Enter a question into ChatGPT. Before you look at the ChatGPT answer, write an answer of your own. Compare your answer to ChatGPT's answer.



CompTIA PenTest+ (PTO-003) (Study Plan)

30-Day Study Plan (Best for people with some experience)

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Watch sections 1, 2 and 3 Download PDFs	Watch sections 4 and 5	Watch sections 6 and 7	Watch sections 8 and 9	Watch section 10
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Watch section 11	Watch sections 12 and 13	Watch section 14 and 15	Watch section 16	Watch section 17
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Watch section 18	Watch sections 19 and 20	Watch section 21	Watch sections 22 and 23	Watch sections 24 and 25
Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
Watch sections 26, 27, and 28	Watch sections 29, 30, and 31	Review notes fill in holes	Take 1 Practice exam	Take 1 Practice exam
Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25
Take 1 Practice exam	Take 1 Practice exams	Take 1 Practice exam	Take 1 Practice exam	Retake 2 Practice Exams
Day 26	Day 27	Day 28	Day 29	Day 30
Retake 2 Practice Exams	Retake 2 Practice Exams	Retake 2 Practice Exams	Retake 2 Practice Exams	Retake 2 Practice Exams



CompTIA PenTest+ (PTO-003) (Study Plan)

60-Day Study Plan (Best for people with little experience)

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Watch sections 1 and 2 Download PDFs	Watch Section 3	Watch Section 4	Watch Sections 5 and 6	Watch Section 7
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Watch Section 8	Watch Section 9	Watch Section 10	Watch Section 11 Videos 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	Watch Section 11 Videos 6,7, 8, 9, and 10
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Relax	Watch Section 12	Watch Section 13	Watch Section 14	Watch Section 15
Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
Watch Section 16	Watch Section 17 videos 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	Watch Section 17 videos 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10	Watch Section 17 videos 11, 12, 13, and 14	Watch Section 18
Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25
Watch Section 19	Relax	Watch Section 20	Watch Section 21; videos 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	Watch Section 21; videos 6, 7, 8, and 9
Day 26	Day 27	Day 28	Day 29	Day 30
Watch Section 21; videos 11, 12, 13, and 14	Watch Section 22	Watch Section 23	Watch Section 24	Watch Section 25



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60-Day Study Plan

Day 31	Day 32	Day 33	Day 34	Day 35
Watch Section 26	Watch Section 27	Watch Section 28	Watch Section 29	Watch Section 30 and 31
Day 36	Day 37	Day 38	Day 39	Day 40
Relax	Review notes and fill in any holes	Take 1 Practice Exam	Take 1 Practice Exam	Take 1 Practice Exam
Day 41	Day 42	Day 43	Day 44	Day 45
Take 1 Practice Exam	Take 1 Practice Exam	Take 1 Practice Exam	Take 1 Practice Exam	Review notes from practice exams and add to notes for class
Day 46	Day 47	Day 48	Day 49	Day 50
Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam
Day 51	Day 52	Day 53	Day 54	Day 55
Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam
Day 56	Day 57	Day 58	Day 59	Day 60
Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam	Retake 1 Practice Exam