

Hi Dave,

I am very sorry for letting your email fall through the cracks. My inbox has been a mess the last few weeks and I'm cleaning everything up this weekend. In addition to this email, please feel free to call me anytime this weekend if you have additional questions or would just like to chat about this further. My cell: (520)668-2492.

The CCNA is a great place for you to start and I suggest being as prepared for this test as possible; if you can, even take it prior to starting the program. I recommend this not necessarily due to it being very difficult (although it is challenging) but, the quicker you can get that cert out of the way, the quicker you can begin focusing on the CCNP which will be the highest cert you are expected to get in the program. Since for most of us in the program, the CCNA was the first exam we had to study for and pass, it was probably the exam that took the most time to complete so, if you can get that out of the way, the better off you will be.

Another cert you could begin taking a look at is the CCDA which we also had to pass and will give you a feel for some design considerations. The CCDP follows and you may also be expected to take that as well.

So, I don't know how technically minded you are and how you feel about certs but, the Cisco industry expert certification is the CCIE. It is certainly quite a challenging exam however, if you are focused and have that set as a goal entering the program, it is something you can achieve within a year; there were about 5 people in my class of 120 I believe that did this. The CCIE will get you recognition in the field, will prepare you significantly to address customer design concerns, will yield job security, and they also pay you a \$5k bonus if you get it I believe. All in all, it may be something you want to look at.

In terms of study materials, the Cisco Press books for the exam you are looking to take are the way to go from a reading standpoint in my opinion. Just make sure they are the most recent versions since exams change and if you are reading a book that is outdated, it won't do you much good. From a configuration perspective, we used PacketTracer in the program although, it does not yield the functionality you would require for some of the post CCNA exams but, is a good starting point. If you can get your hands on a router and some switches, that would be golden. I might be able to give you a hand on that.

Of course, none of the certs do a pre sales SE any good if you cannot speak to the products and visions. I would suggest getting a feel for this as much as you can while addressing the certifications. The most practical way to do this (and a manner in which we research extensively in the field) is to simply go to [www.cisco.com](http://www.cisco.com), click on products/solutions and begin exploring the different offerings. Typically the main product pages will have a video intro you can watch. Then, if you scroll down the page for the products, you will see a link to "Data Sheets." I would suggest becoming familiar with these. Stay away from the small business solutions as you will not cover these and won't get paid on them.

The order in which I would prioritize researching products would be:

1. Routing
2. Switching
3. Data Center
4. Collaboration (Voice/Video)
5. Wireless
6. Security
7. Etc

In essence, get a good feel for the website and how to research technical information as you will be expected to do this extensively. Sadly, Google is better at providing info to the Cisco site than the search engine on the Cisco site. If you want Google to search specifically the Cisco site for results, within Google type "site:www.cisco.com *your search criteria*." Sounds odd but, that works pretty well for me.

To get yourself in the SE mindset as well, it wouldn't hurt spending 10 to 15 minutes a day on [www.networkworld.com](http://www.networkworld.com) and track what's going on in the industry in terms of some of the technologies that are of most interest to you.

Again, I apologize for my delay and hope this helps a bit. Please don't hesitate to give me a call if you would like to chat further.

Best of luck and congrats!

-Miguel