

Overview of the Certification Process

You must pass two certification exams to become an A+ certified technician. The Core Hardware Service Technician component is covered by exam number 220-301 and the Operating System Technologies component is covered by exam number 220-302. These closed-book exams provide a valid and reliable measure of your technical proficiency and expertise. Developed in consultation with computer-industry professionals who have on-the-job experience with multivendor hardware and software products in the workplace, the exams are conducted by two independent organizations: VUE and Prometric. VUE has more than 3,400 authorized testing centers serving more than 130 countries. Prometric has more than 3,500 testing centers.

The exam prices vary depending on your CompTIA member status:

CompTIA members: US\$93 each

Non-CompTIA members: US\$145 each

To schedule an exam, call VUE at 877-551-7587. You can also contact VUE or locate a convenient testing center through its Web site at www.vue.com. Schedule an exam with Prometric at 800-77-MICRO or www.prometric.com/default.asp.

ABOUT THE A+ CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The A+ Certification is an internationally recognized industry-standard certification designed to measure the competency of an entry-level technician. *Entry level* in this case is defined as the equivalent knowledge of a technician with six months' experience in a support role. This certification is attained by passing the two tests. Each of these tests covers a separate series of objectives, as described in this book's introduction.

The Computing and Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) developed the A+ Certification in response to several factors—not the least of which was the growing need for computer hardware and software manufacturers to create a standard curriculum. Prior to this standard, each manufacturer created individual lower-level courses to provide a logical path to its own product offerings. As a result, entry-level courses were duplicated by various manufacturers, albeit in many different ways and with many different results.

CompTIA itself provides the following reasons for the creation of the A+ Certification:

- To set an industrywide, nationally recognized standard of basic competency levels in the field of computer service

- To maximize efficiency in recruiting, hiring, training, and promoting employees
- To help meet the needs of today's information technology workforce by providing individuals with in-demand skills
- To give job seekers identifiable career paths, transferable skills, and industry-recognized credentials
- To give educators and trainers the standards necessary to better prepare individuals to meet today's job-skill requirements

The A+ Certification has undergone a few changes since its inception. The most recent changes (the October 2003 version) include updated information about microprocessors, microprocessor cooling systems, networking, and Internet connectivity methods. The areas of Installing, Configuring, and Upgrading have taken on more weight in the exam, as has the Basic Networking objective. On the other hand, the Diagnosing and Troubleshooting objective has less importance. On the Operating System Technologies side, Windows XP has been added to the exam throughout. However, Windows 95 material still remains on the exam. As with the Core Hardware exam, networking topics have gained weight, whereas the Diagnosing and Troubleshooting objective has diminished in value.

You might be asking why this exam is for you, and why now. Aside from joining the swelling ranks of A+ certi-

fied technicians (more than 463,000 members and rising), you gain access to the CompTIA organization through the A+ program and the benefits this access affords. CompTIA's Web site, for instance, identifies the following benefits for prospective A+ technicians:

- *Recognized proof of professional achievement*—A level of competence commonly accepted and valued by the industry.
- *Enhanced job opportunities*—Many employers give preference in hiring to applicants with certification. They view this as proof that a new hire knows the procedures and technologies required.
- *Opportunity for advancement*—The certification can be a plus when an employer awards job advancements and promotions.
- *Training requirement*—Certification might be required as a prerequisite to attending a vendor's training course, so employers may offer advance training to those employees who are already certified.
- *Customer confidence*—As the general public learns about certification, customers will require that only certified technicians be assigned to their accounts.

For any additional information or clarification of the CompTIA A+ Certification path and its history and benefits, consult the CompTIA home page at

www.comptia.org.