

AWS SAA-C03 Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

65 Scored questions	2h 10m Time limit	720/1000 (scaled score, r... Passing score
\$150 Exam fee	Amazon Web Services (A... Governing body	

A dense, scannable reference for exam-week review of the AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate (SAA-C03) credential.

Exam Logistics at a Glance

Attribute	Detail
Question format	Multiple choice or multiple response
Question count	65 questions total (50 scored, 15 unscored)
Duration	130 minutes
Cost	150 USD
Passing score	720 on a scaled range of 100 to 1,000
Validity	3 years
Delivery	Pearson VUE, in person or online proctored

- The exam contains 65 questions that are either multiple choice or multiple response.
- 50 questions affect your score, while 15 unscored questions do not affect your score, and you cannot tell which is which, so treat every question as scored.
- Candidates are given 130 minutes to complete the exam.
- The cost to take the exam is 150 USD.
- Results are reported as a scaled score of 100 to 1,000, and the minimum passing score is 720.
- This certification is valid for 3 years.
- AWS Certification exams are currently offered through Pearson VUE.
- Online proctoring is available for all AWS Certification exams from Pearson VUE, so you can test from home if you meet the setup requirements.

Who This Exam Is For

- The target candidate should have at least 1 year of hands-on experience designing cloud solutions that use AWS services; this is guidance, not a hard prerequisite.
- The exam validates a candidate's ability to design solutions based on the AWS Well-Architected Framework, so review its six pillars (operational excellence, security, reliability, performance efficiency, cost optimization, sustainability) before test day.

Content Domains (Quick List)

The exam has four content domains, weighted as follows:

1. Design Secure Architectures: 30% of scored content (the largest domain; expect heavy coverage of IAM, encryption, and network security).
2. Design Resilient Architectures: 26% of scored content (multi-AZ, failover, decoupling, backup and DR strategies).
3. Design High-Performing Architectures: 24% of scored content (compute, storage, database, and networking performance choices).
4. Design Cost-Optimized Architectures: 20% of scored content (pricing models, right-sizing, storage tiering).

Key Terms and Concepts to Memorize

- Shared Responsibility Model: AWS secures the cloud infrastructure; you secure what you put in the cloud (data, IAM policies, OS patching on EC2, etc.).
- Well-Architected Framework pillars: operational excellence, security, reliability, performance efficiency, cost optimization, sustainability.
- IAM fundamentals: principle of least privilege, roles vs. users vs. groups, policy evaluation logic (an explicit deny always wins).
- High availability vs. fault tolerance vs. disaster recovery: know the distinctions and where Multi-AZ, Auto Scaling, and cross-Region replication each fit.
- Storage classes and their tradeoffs: durability, availability, retrieval time, and cost across object, block, and file storage options.
- Decoupling patterns: using queues and event buses to separate producers from consumers and improve resilience.
- Caching layers: content delivery, in-memory caching, and database read replicas as performance levers.
- Cost levers: reserved or committed-use pricing vs. on-demand vs. spot capacity, and lifecycle policies for storage cost control.

Common Gotchas and Traps

- Exam questions often present two technically correct answers; pick the one that is most secure, most cost-effective, or best matches the stated constraint (for example, least operational overhead).
- Do not assume the newest or most powerful service is the right answer; the correct choice usually matches the specific requirement (cost, latency, compliance) called out in the scenario.
- Watch for scenario keywords like minimize cost, least administrative overhead, or multi-Region; they signal which Well-Architected pillar the question is testing.
- Distractor answers frequently mix a real AWS service with an incorrect capability, so read each option carefully rather than pattern-matching on service names alone.
- Unscored questions are indistinguishable from scored ones, so pace yourself evenly across all 65 questions rather than rushing after question 50.
- Reschedules are time-limited: each exam appointment can only be rescheduled twice, and candidates can reschedule up to 24 hours before their scheduled exam time, so lock in a realistic date early.

Identification and Policy Requirements

- Teen candidates ages 13 to 17 must present one form of photo ID, and school IDs are acceptable.
- The accompanying parent or guardian must present a valid government-issued ID.

Recertification Notes

- A certification must be active to renew, so don't let it lapse before scheduling a recert attempt.
- Renewing by passing the latest version of the exam grants 3 more years of validity.
- Time is extended based on the date of completion of the recertification action rather than from the current expiration date, so recertifying early doesn't shorten your total validity window.

Night-Before Checklist

- Confirm your Pearson VUE appointment time, location or online-proctoring setup, and bring a valid government-issued photo ID.
- Skim the four content domains one more time and mentally rank them by weight: Security (30%) is greater than Resilience (26%), which is greater than Performance (24%), which is greater than Cost (20%).
- Review the Well-Architected Framework pillars; nearly every scenario question maps back to one of them.
- Do a light pass on IAM policy logic, storage class tradeoffs, and high-availability patterns; these show up across multiple domains.
- Plan your pacing: with 65 questions in 130 minutes, that's exactly 2 minutes per question, so flag and skip anything that stalls you past that.
- Get sleep rather than cramming; recognition-based recall degrades faster than reasoning ability under fatigue.
- If testing online, verify your room, webcam, and ID meet the online-proctoring requirements the night before, not the morning of.

Official sources

- Amazon Web Services (AWS) — AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate (SAA-C03) Exam Guide: <https://docs.aws.amazon.com/aws-certification/latest/solutions-architect-associate-03/solutions-architect-associate-03.html>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025 — Computer Network Architects (SOC 15-1241): <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes151241.htm>
- Amazon Web Services (AWS) — AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate — Certification Overview: <https://aws.amazon.com/certification/certified-solutions-architect-associate/>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/technology/aws-solutions-architect-associate