

CompTIA A+ Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

90 Scored questions	1h 30m Time limit	Core 1 (220-1201): 675 o... Passing score
— Exam fee	CompTIA Governing body	

CompTIA A+ is an entry-level IT certification and industry standard for launching an IT support career. It requires passing two separate exams, Core 1 (220-1201) and Core 2 (220-1202), which candidates may take in any order.

Exam Logistics at a Glance

Detail	Core 1 (220-1201)	Core 2 (220-1202)
Focus	Hardware and networking	Operating systems and security
Duration	90 minutes	90 minutes
Max questions	90 questions	90 questions
Passing score	675 (on a 900-point scale)	700 (on a 900-point scale)
Content domains	5 domains	4 domains

Both exams award 90 minutes and up to 90 questions each, so pace yourself at roughly one minute per question with a buffer for flagged review.

Core 1 (220-1201) Domains

- Hardware — 25%
- Networking — 23%
- Hardware and network troubleshooting — 28%
- Mobile devices — 13%
- Virtualization and cloud computing — 11%

Core 2 (220-1202) Domains

- Operating systems — 28%
- Security — 28%
- Software troubleshooting — 23%
- Operational procedures — 21%

Key Terms and Concepts to Memorize

- Know the troubleshooting methodology cold: identify the problem, establish a theory, test the theory, establish a plan, implement the solution, verify full system functionality, and document findings — this sequence underlies both troubleshooting domains.
- Distinguish hardware components (motherboards, RAM types, storage interfaces, power supplies) from peripheral and mobile device hardware, since Core 1 tests both as separate weighted areas.
- Understand core networking concepts — IP addressing, common ports/protocols, wireless standards, and SOHO

network configuration — since Networking carries a substantial share of Core 1.

- Master operating system fundamentals across Windows, macOS, Linux, and mobile OSes, including installation, command-line basics, and file system navigation.
- Know security fundamentals: malware types, social engineering tactics, authentication/authorization concepts, and basic mitigation techniques, since Security ties with Operating systems as Core 2's heaviest domain.
- Be comfortable with operational procedures such as safety practices, documentation, change management, and professional communication — these are often underestimated but consistently tested.
- Virtualization and cloud computing concepts (hypervisors, cloud models, resource requirements) form a smaller but distinct Core 1 domain that is easy to overlook in study plans.

Common Gotchas and Traps

- Do not assume Core 1 and Core 2 share a passing score — Core 1 passes at 675 while Core 2 passes at 700, both out of 900, so calibrate your practice-test target separately for each exam.
- Because troubleshooting is the single largest Core 1 domain, questions often blend hardware and networking symptoms in one scenario — read the full scenario before jumping to a hardware-only or network-only answer.
- In Core 2, Operating systems and Security are tied as the top-weighted domains, so do not over-invest study time in one at the expense of the other.
- Operational procedures is easy to deprioritize since it feels like “soft” content, but at 21% of Core 2 it can make or break a borderline score.
- Watch for questions that test process order (e.g., troubleshooting steps or malware removal steps) rather than just factual recall — sequencing errors are a frequent trap.
- Do not confuse the two exam codes: 220-1201 is Core 1, 220-1202 is Core 2 — mixing them up on registration or study materials wastes time.

Night-Before Checklist

- Confirm which exam you are sitting for tomorrow (Core 1 220-1201 or Core 2 220-1202) and pull up that domain weighting one more time.
- Skim the troubleshooting methodology steps in order until you can recite them without hesitation.
- Review your weakest domain based on recent practice-test results rather than re-reading everything.
- Remember the exam gives 90 minutes for up to 90 questions — plan to flag and move on rather than stalling on any single item.
- Know your target score going in: 675/900 for Core 1, 700/900 for Core 2.
- Get sufficient sleep — fatigue undermines recall far more than an extra hour of cramming helps.
- Prepare required identification and confirm your testing appointment details in advance.
- If you pass both exams, note that the certification is valid for three years and can later be renewed via Continuing Education Units without retaking the exam.

Official sources

- CompTIA — CompTIA A+ Core 1 (220-1201) Exam Details: <https://www.comptia.org/en-us/certifications/a/core-1-v15/>
- CompTIA — CompTIA A+ Core 2 (220-1202) Exam Details: <https://www.comptia.org/en-us/certifications/a/core-2-v15/>
- CompTIA — CompTIA Network+ certification exam details: <https://www.comptia.org/en-us/certifications/network/>

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