

Associate Cloud Engineer Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

— Scored questions \$125 Exam fee	2h Time limit Google Cloud Governing body	— Passing score
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A condensed reference for the Google Cloud Certified - Associate Cloud Engineer exam. Use this alongside hands-on practice in the Google Cloud console and gcloud CLI — this exam rewards muscle memory, not just theory.

Exam Logistics at a Glance

Attribute	Detail
Format	Multiple choice / multiple select
Duration	120 minutes
Question count	50-60 questions
Registration fee	125 USD
Recommended experience	6+ months of hands-on Google Cloud experience
Certification validity	3 years

Passing score is not published by Google; treat every domain as pass/fail-critical rather than banking on a specific cutoff.

Content Domains (Quick List)

- Setting up a cloud solution environment — 20% of the exam. Projects, billing, IAM basics, gcloud/Cloud Shell/console setup.
- Planning and implementing a cloud solution — 30% of the exam, the single largest domain. Compute, storage, network, and data solution selection and provisioning.
- Ensuring the successful operation of a cloud solution — 30% of the exam, tied for largest. Managing compute, storage, networking, and monitoring/logging in production.
- Configuring access and security — 20% of the exam. IAM roles, service accounts, and org-level security controls.

Because Planning/Implementing and Successful Operation together make up 60% of the exam, prioritize deep, scenario-based practice with Compute Engine, GKE, Cloud Storage, Cloud SQL, and VPC networking over memorizing feature lists.

Key Terms and Concepts to Memorize

- Resource hierarchy — Organization -> Folder -> Project -> Resource; IAM policies inherit downward and combine (never restrict) at each level.
- IAM roles — Basic (Owner/Editor/Viewer), Predefined (service-scoped), and Custom roles; predefined roles are preferred for least-privilege design.
- Service accounts — Identities for workloads, not people; know how to attach one to a Compute Engine instance and scope its permissions.
- Compute options — Compute Engine (VMs, managed instance groups, autoscaling), GKE (containers), App Engine

(PaaS), Cloud Run (serverless containers), Cloud Functions (event-driven serverless).

- Storage classes — Standard, Nearline, Coldline, Archive; differ by minimum storage duration and retrieval cost, not just price per GB.
- Networking basics — VPCs are global, subnets are regional; firewall rules are stateful and default-deny for ingress; Cloud NAT for outbound-only internet access from private instances.
- Deployment tooling — Deployment Manager and Terraform for infrastructure as code; gcloud, gsutil, bq as the primary CLIs.
- Monitoring stack — Cloud Monitoring (metrics/alerting), Cloud Logging (logs), uptime checks, and log-based metrics.
- Billing controls — Budgets and alerts, billing accounts linked to projects, and quota management to prevent runaway spend.

Common Gotchas and Traps

- Confusing predefined IAM roles with primitive (basic) roles — exam questions often test whether you'd reach for Owner/Editor when a narrower predefined role is the better-practice answer.
- Forgetting that firewall rules apply at the VPC network level, not the instance level, and that rule priority (lower number wins) determines evaluation order.
- Mixing up regional vs. zonal vs. global resources — persistent disks are zonal, static IPs can be regional or global, and VPCs are always global.
- Assuming Cloud Storage retrieval is free across all classes — Nearline/Coldline/Archive carry retrieval costs and early-deletion fees.
- Overlooking that managed instance groups need a health check and instance template to autoscale and self-heal correctly.
- Treating Cloud SQL as fully serverless — it still requires instance sizing, maintenance windows, and manual/automated backup configuration.
- Underestimating the operations domain — many candidates over-prepare on provisioning and under-prepare on monitoring, logging, and troubleshooting scenarios.

Night-Before Checklist

1. Review the resource hierarchy and IAM inheritance rules one more time — this underpins several other domains.
2. Skim the differences between Compute Engine, GKE, App Engine, Cloud Run, and Cloud Functions so you can match a scenario to the right compute product quickly.
3. Re-confirm storage class trade-offs (cost vs. retrieval speed vs. minimum duration).
4. Walk through a mental checklist for setting up a new VPC: subnets, firewall rules, Cloud NAT, and a test VM.
5. Practice reading exam scenarios for constraints (cost, latency, compliance) since most questions are scenario-based rather than pure recall.
6. Confirm exam logistics: arrive early, bring required ID, and budget time per question given the 120-minute window across 50-60 questions.
7. Get sleep — the exam rewards quick scenario reasoning over memorized trivia, and fatigue hurts that most.

Official sources

- Google Cloud — Associate Cloud Engineer Certification: <https://cloud.google.com/learn/certification/cloud-engineer>
- Google Cloud — Associate Cloud Engineer Certification Exam Guide: https://services.google.com/fh/files/misc/associate_cloud_engineer_exam_guide_english.pdf
- Google Cloud — Associate Cloud Engineer Certification: <https://cloud.google.com/learn/certification/cloud-engineer>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/technology/google-associate-cloud-engineer