

# Terraform Associate Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

|                  |                  |               |
|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| —                | <b>1h</b>        | —             |
| Scored questions | Time limit       | Passing score |
| <b>\$70.5</b>    | <b>HashiCorp</b> |               |
| Exam fee         | Governing body   |               |

A dense, night-before reference for the Terraform Associate exam. Skim the table, drill the domain list, memorize the terms, then run the checklist.

## Exam Logistics At-a-Glance

| Detail                   | Value                                                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Format                   | Online proctored, multiple choice                     |
| Duration                 | 60 minutes                                            |
| Cost                     | \$70.50 USD                                           |
| Question types           | 3 types: true/false, multiple choice, multiple answer |
| Objective domains        | 8 domains                                             |
| Certification validity   | 2 years                                               |
| Terraform version tested | 1.12                                                  |
| Free retake              | Not included in price                                 |

- Prerequisites: basic terminal skills and a basic understanding of on-premises and cloud architecture; professional experience is recommended but not strictly required.
- The exam does not publish per-objective percentage weightings, so treat all 8 domains as roughly equally important when you study rather than trying to guess which ones are worth more points.
- Audience: cloud engineers, DevOps practitioners, and anyone who uses Terraform in a production capacity.

## The 8 Official Content Domains

1. Understand Infrastructure as Code (IaC) concepts
2. Understand the purpose of Terraform (vs other IaC tools)
3. Understand Terraform basics
4. Use the core Terraform workflow
5. Read, generate, and modify configuration
6. Interact with Terraform modules
7. Implement and maintain state
8. Use Terraform outside of core workflow (plus HCP Terraform)

Within the state-management domain, expect coverage of local vs remote backends, state locking, and drift management. Within the HCP Terraform domain, expect coverage of cloud-based infrastructure creation, collaboration features, and workspace organization.

## Key Terms and Concepts to Memorize

- Providers — plugins that translate HCL into API calls for a target platform (AWS, Azure, GCP, etc.); declared in a `required_providers` block.
- Resources — the core building block describing one infrastructure object; the resource block is what actually gets created, updated, or destroyed.
- Data sources — read-only lookups (data blocks) that pull in information about infrastructure not managed by the current configuration.
- State file — the JSON record mapping real-world resources to your configuration; never edit it by hand, use terraform state subcommands instead.
- Core workflow — write -> plan -> apply, sometimes extended to init -> validate -> plan -> apply -> destroy.
- Modules — reusable, parameterized configuration bundles; a root module calls child modules via module blocks.
- Variables and outputs — variable blocks parameterize input, output blocks expose values for use by other configurations or the CLI.
- State locking — prevents concurrent writes to the same state file when using a supported remote backend.
- Drift — divergence between real infrastructure and the state file, typically caused by manual out-of-band changes; detected via terraform plan or refresh.
- Workspaces — a mechanism for managing multiple distinct state files from one configuration, useful for environment separation.
- HCL (HashiCorp Configuration Language) — the declarative syntax Terraform configuration is written in.
- Idempotency and declarative model — Terraform configuration describes desired end-state, not a sequence of imperative steps, and re-applying an unchanged configuration should produce no changes.

## Common Gotchas and Traps

- Don't confuse terraform plan (dry run, shows proposed changes) with terraform apply (executes changes) — the exam loves scenario questions testing which command does what.
- Remember that not all IaC tools work the same way: Terraform is declarative and largely provider-agnostic, unlike some competitor tools that are more narrowly scoped or purely imperative — questions on the purpose of Terraform often hinge on this distinction.
- State files can contain sensitive data in plaintext; know that remote backends with encryption and access controls are the recommended mitigation, not manual redaction.
- Because there are no published domain weightings, don't skip a domain assuming it's low-value — every domain is fair game.
- Multiple-answer questions require selecting all correct options; partial credit is not implied by the question type, so read the select all that apply instructions carefully.
- A free retake is not bundled with the exam fee — factor that into your pass/fail risk tolerance before scheduling.
- Version-specific behavior can shift between Terraform releases; the current exam targets version 1.12, so verify any command syntax you're rusty on against that version rather than an older tutorial.
- Don't assume HCP Terraform questions are optional extras — workspace organization and collaboration features are an explicit part of the official content areas.

## Night-Before Checklist

- Confirm your online proctoring setup: stable internet, quiet room, valid photo ID, and a clear desk per proctoring rules.
- Re-skim all 8 domain objectives once, out loud if possible, to refresh recall rather than doing new deep study.
- Review the core workflow commands (init, validate, plan, apply, destroy) and what each one does and does not do.
- Review state concepts one more time: locking, remote backends, drift, and the danger of manual state edits.
- Double check exam logistics the day before: duration is 60 minutes, cost was already paid, and the format is online proctored multiple choice.

- On exam day, budget your time so a 60-minute window leaves room to flag and revisit uncertain questions rather than rushing the last few.

### Official sources

- HashiCorp — Learning Path — Terraform Associate (004):  
<https://developer.hashicorp.com/terraform/tutorials/certification-004/associate-study-004>
- HashiCorp — Infrastructure Automation Certifications — Terraform Associate (004):  
<https://developer.hashicorp.com/certifications/infrastructure-automation>
- HashiCorp — Exam Review — Terraform Associate (004) Objectives:  
<https://developer.hashicorp.com/terraform/tutorials/certification-004/associate-review-004>

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Free practice questions for this exam: [www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/technology/terraform-associate](http://www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/technology/terraform-associate)