

Be Bona Fide: Get Certified

How to become an Adobe Certified Expert or Trainer

STC @ 50

May 20, 2003

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What I'm not going to do

- ☛ Give away exam answers
(or Adobe won't let me play anymore)
- ☛ Give you secrets that will guarantee your passing
(Besides the cramming, you need hands-on experience)
- ☛ Subject you to an hour of my opinion — everything here is someone else's work

What I am going to do

- ☛ Define the Adobe ACE and ACTP programs
- ☛ Talk about how certification can help you
- ☛ Go over the certification steps
- ☛ Describe the Adobe exam format
- ☛ Give you study suggestions
- ☛ Run through some example questions

What I hope you'll do

- ☛ Give me your opinions
- ☛ Share your experiences
- ☛ Recommend information sources, tools
- ☛ Make jokes

Information sources

- ☛ Carrie Cooper
Training Partner Relations Manager
Adobe Solutions Network
- ☛ John Skelton
FM ACE and question provider
ACTP in Adobe Acrobat, FrameMaker,
FrameMaker+SGML, InDesign and Go Live
Website: <http://www.FAQmasters.com>

Information sources (continued)

- 30 survey respondents:
- ☛ 15 took the FrameMaker exam
 - ☛ 5 took the Photoshop exam
 - ☛ 3 took the PageMaker exam
 - ☛ 2 took the Acrobat
 - ☛ 1 took the Illustrator exam
 - ☛ 3 took the InDesign exam

Information sources (continued)

Experience of survey respondents:

- 16 had taken ACE exams before
- 14 took the exam for the first time
- 5 people had 10+ years
- 2 people had 8-10 years
- 10 people had 5-7 years
- 6 people had 3-4 years
- 7 people had 0-2 years

Information sources (continued)

☛ Framers from the framers email list:
www.frameusers.com

☛ Adobe website:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/aceprogram.html>

Purpose of the ACE certification

- ☛ An Adobe Certified Expert has passed an Adobe Product Proficiency Exam for an Adobe software product.
 - ☛ Adobe Certified Experts are eligible to promote themselves to clients or employers as highly skilled, expert-level users of Adobe software.
 - ☛ ACE certification is a recognized worldwide standard for excellence in Adobe software knowledge.
- From the Adobe website

Why be certified?

According to Carrie Cooper, Training Partner Relations Manager, Adobe Solutions Network:

- ☛ "The ACE does hold a lot of distinction in the design area. It helps numerous candidates with their job searches."
- ☛ "The education market is a growing area of our ACEs. Many schools are using ACE to test their students on their skills on these products."

Why be certified?

Survey says...

Do you think having ACE credentials has helped you with your career?

- ☞ 9 people said it was very useful
- ☞ 3 people said it was quite useful
- ☞ 8 people said it was fairly useful
- ☞ 9 people said it has had little effect

Why be certified?

ACEs say...

"One of the most useful qualifications I have passed. In fact... I am an ACE 3 times over with Acrobat 4 and 5 and Adobe InDesign ."

— Comment from the ACE survey

Why be certified?

ACEs say...

"Of course, my own professional development is important to me, and FrameMaker certification is a tangible milestone that I can wear proudly on my cube wall, even if nobody else really knows or cares what FrameMaker is."

— Sean Brierley (on the framers mail list, frameusers.com)

Benefits of your certificate

- ☛ You can promote yourself to clients or employers as a highly skilled user of Adobe software.
- ☛ You get an ACE certificate to put in your portfolio
- ☛ You have permission to use the program logo
- ☛ You get heads up on information about promotions and Adobe events
- ☛ If you want to be an ACTP, certification is an important first step

How many ACEs are there?

“There are over 7000 ACEs worldwide.
Photoshop, Acrobat and InDesign are the most
common product certifications.”
— Carrie Cooper of Adobe

ACE history

The first ACE exam was given in 1995 for
Photoshop 3.0, followed closely by Acrobat 3,
After Effects 3, FrameMaker 5, and
PageMaker 6.5.

Exams you can take

Adobe Acrobat®	Adobe Acrobat® eForms
Adobe After Effects®	Adobe FrameMaker®
Adobe GoLive®	Adobe Illustrator®
Adobe InDesign®	Adobe LiveMotion™
Adobe PageMaker®	Adobe Photoshop®
Adobe Premiere®	

How the exams are delivered

- ☛ Administered by Prometric, an independent third-party testing company
- ☛ Taken on a Windows computer
- ☛ Closed-book tests
- ☛ Made up of 60 to 90 multiple-choice questions chosen from a larger pool of questions
- ☛ One to two hours long
- ☛ The results are given to you at the testing center immediately after you complete the exam.

Who writes the questions

- ☛ "A variety of subject matter experts provide the questions."
 - ☛ "Some are internal Adobe employees from several organizations within the company (tech support, product/program marketing, developers, etc.)"
 - ☛ "Additionally, we rely on many of our training partners to provide their input and test questions to the exams. Must be ACEs on that particular product."
- Carrie Cooper, Adobe

Comment from the ACE survey:

"As a contributor to many of the Adobe exams, I can tell you how difficult it is to come up with a small number of objectives to meet the number of questions allowed on the exam, then split those into smaller groups, and try to write questions that match those objectives, without being too vague, or conversely asking questions that really don't test the knowledge of those taking the exam."

The exam life cycle

- ☛ Technical review
 - ☛ Edit
 - ☛ Exam beta
 - ☛ Forms build/Item selection
 - ☛ Cut score meeting (Where the pass//fail rate is determined)
 - ☛ Final exam build/QA
 - ☛ Exam publish
 - ☛ Localization
 - ☛ Ongoing maintenance
- Carrie Cooper, Adobe

How the exams are tested

"The exams go through multiple edits and reviews for language and technical accuracy. Then, the exams go through a beta where:

- ☛ Entire item pool is delivered to a limited number of individuals in the target audience
- ☛ Exam data is analyzed to determine which items have "good performance" based on item statistics."

— Carrie Cooper, Adobe

Localization

ACE exams are offered in various languages.

- ☛ "As a rule of thumb all exams are localized into French, German, Japanese. There are currently a few exams in Spanish and Italian." – Carrie Cooper, Adobe
- ☛ List of exams and languages:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/aceexamlist.html>

One FrameMaker test?

There is now only one exam for FM.

There used to be three.

- ☛ One for structured
 - ☛ One for non-structured
 - ☛ One for FrameMaker+SGML developers
- (Acrobat has 2)

One FrameMaker test?

- ☛ "There is only one FrameMaker product now. FrameMaker 7.0 ships as one product combining standard FrameMaker and FrameMaker +SGML."
- ☛ "There is a separate exam for Acrobat Forms which is really a Forms exam (which) will not be specific to a version of Acrobat. There was a high demand for this internally and externally so we created it."

— Carrie Cooper, Adobe

ACEs say:

"FrameMaker is a very complex product and is used in a variety of ways. Previously there were 3 separate ACE tests, cramming it all into one means superficial coverage of many areas."

— Comment from the ACE survey

ACEs say:

"I believe the FrameMaker exam should be broken into three parts — for those who use FM in the standard mode — for those who use the structured mode — and persons who use it in both modes. I scored poorly on the structured mode because I have not used it in that mode."

— Comment from the ACE survey

ACEs say:

"FrameMaker 7 is now one product, so if a user is labeled an expert, he or she should be able to apply FrameMaker expertly in all the ways users will apply it, as it comes out of the box, anyway."

I had never used structured FM before, but after I ran the the Cookbook a couple times, and worked on a structured template of my own, I passed the FM 7 exam with no problem."

— Comment from the ACE survey

What test takers think of the exams

Survey question: "Did the exam covered the software tool thoroughly?"

- ☞ 7 said it was very thorough
- ☞ 10 said it was quite thorough
- ☞ 12 said it was fairly thorough
- ☞ 1 said it wasn't thorough

What test takers think of the exams

Survey question: "Did the questions reflect their real-life use of the tool?"

- ☞ 1 said it reflected use very well
- ☞ 8 said it reflected use quite well
- ☞ 14 said it reflected use fairly well
- ☞ 6 said it did not reflect use very well

ACEs say:

"I expected the FrameMaker ACE exam to be task-based. (For example, I expected that create a template, actually be tested on applying master pages, etc.)

I was surprised when it turned out to be a multiple choice test..."

— Comment from the ACE survey

How hard are the exams?

Survey question: "Was the exam easy or hard for you?"

- ☞ 5 said it was way easy
- ☞ 7 said it was easy
- ☞ 13 said it was somewhat challenging
- ☞ 4 said it was very challenging

ACEs say:

"The exams can be easy or hard. Last time the InDesign exam (version 1.5) was tough. This time, easy. Same with Photoshop — sometimes hard, sometimes easy."

— Comment from the ACE survey

How well did they do?

Survey question: "Did you pass the exam?"

- ☞ 13 said they did great
- ☞ 5 said they did pretty well
- ☞ 7 said they did average
- ☞ 4 just made it
- ☞ 1 didn't pass

ACEs say:

"Having used FrameMaker for many years...
I assumed that the test would be a cakewalk.
Wrong! First time through, I failed it.

After that, I dived into the user's manual and brushed up on all of the things that I hadn't used in a production environment. I assumed that the test would be the same and I could just focus on the areas of weakness.

Well, the test was similar, but not the same questions. I still did well... but it was far more challenging than I expected. I'd have to say that anyone who passes the test knows the product." — Comment from the ACE survey

ACEs say:

"The exam I took for InDesign 1.5 I failed twice before passing. I was shocked since I considered myself quite knowledgeable.

The 2.0 exam was a bit easier, although I expected it to be harder. Don't know about the other Adobe exams, but InDesign was pretty tough, with many tricky questions."

— Comment from the ACE survey

ACEs say:

"I found the test for Photoshop 7 to be MUCH more difficult than the exam for version 6. Some of the questions were not clear, or could have had several correct answers.

I found one question on web graphics resolution where none of the answers were correct."

(Comment from the ACE survey)—

How you can become an ACE

1. Check the ACE information on Adobe's Web site including:
 - ACE program:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/aceprogram.html>
 - ACE steps:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/acehowto.html>
 - Exam bulletins:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/acebulletins.html>
 - List of ACE exams and their languages:
<http://partners.adobe.com/asn/training/aceexamlist.html>

How you can become an ACE (continued)

2. Gather your study materials.
3. List the topics (from the Product Proficiency Exam Bulletin) you need to study.
4. Study for the exam.
5. Register for the Adobe Product Proficiency Exam at the Prometric website or by calling Prometric at 800-356-EXAM.

How you can become an ACE (continued)

6. Pay a fee to Prometric
US \$150 Euros 138.00 AU \$205.00
(“Adobe receives a portion of the fees, which are put the budget to create the exams.” – Carrie Cooper)
7. Sign the ACE program agreement.
8. Take and pass the exam.
9. Your score is electronically reported to Adobe.

Signing up for the exam

- ☛ Locate a Prometric test site at www.2test.com or in North America, call 800.356.3926.
- ☛ There are more than 1000 authorized testing centers worldwide.
- ☛ Be choosy if you can. If you have a choice, visit the test sites and pick one with comfortable chairs and up-to-date computers.

ACEs say...

"The computer equipment, room lighting and ergonomics were horrible. I couldn't wait to get the heck out of there.

The aged and fuzzy display gave me a headache, the chair and desk made my back sore and the florescent lighting made me nauseous." — Comment from the ACE survey

Signing up for the exam (continued)

- ☛ You can schedule your exam up to six weeks in advance.
- ☛ Exams are conducted Monday through Saturday during normal business hours.

How the ACEs study

Ranking:

1. User guide
2. Third party books
3. Classroom in a book

How the ACEs study (continued)

4. Other:

- "Years of hands-on experience"
- "Real world experience"
- "Basically plenty experience using the product in a variety of situations"
- "User-to-User forums"

5. Online training

6. A trainer in a live class

Practice test?

There is no longer a practice test on line.

"At one point in time we did have a practice exam for Photoshop 5. This was very out of date so we needed to remove it from our web site. Unfortunately, we do not have the budget to create practice exams at this time."

— Carrie Cooper of Adobe

How the ACEs study

Use the bulletin:

"...it lists precisely what is covered on the exam....
it pays to study this bulletin and then go to the
reference material and study up on it....

.... The list is actually not that long. Not for someone
who is going to call themselves an expert!"

— Steve Murphy (on the framers mail list,
frameusers.com)

How the ACEs study (continued)

"... I read the entire user guide. Then I went down
the proficiency bulletin, item by item, and went back
and re-read the portions of the guide that dealt with
each item.

Of course, it helps to be using FM extensively, and
have a lot of experience. That just takes time..."

— Steve Murphy (on the framers mail list,
www.frameusers.com)

How the ACEs study (continued)

- ☛ “.. To prepare, I went through each example in CIB, and also read through each chapter in the user guide.” — Sean Brierley (on the framers mail list, frameusers.com)
- ☛ “I prepared for my FM 7 ACE with a friend - we quizzed the dickens out of each other on all the things in the ACE Bulletin and all the other stuff we knew about "vanilla" FM and SGML/Structured FM, too.” — Comment from the ACE survey

Exam day

Be in good shape for the exam

- ☛ Sleep
- ☛ Eat
- ☛ Breath deeply
- ☛ Know where the test center is
- ☛ Leave early

Get to the exam center

- ☛ Show up a few minutes early
- ☛ Bring two IDs
- ☛ You'll sign an agreement

Exam room

- ☛ The test room is a computer lab
- ☛ There will be people taking other certification tests
- ☛ Scratch paper and a pencil is provided, but after the test you leave them behind
- ☛ Your computer will be set up with your test
- ☛ You can take an untimed practice test to see how it works
- ☛ Don't rush, you will probably have plenty of time

Exam time

Survey question:

“Did you have enough time to finish?”

- ☞ 9 people said: Lots and lots of time
- ☞ 17 people said: Plenty of time
- ☞ 3 people said: Just enough time
- ☞ 1 person said: Not enough time

Exam

- ☞ The exam is entirely on computer, with 90-100 multiple-choice questions.
- ☞ You have one to two hours, depending on the test.
- ☞ You will *not* be using the Adobe software program.
- ☞ A timer at the top of your screen shows you how much time you have left.

Exam format

Four basic question formats:

1. Multiple choice with four choices:
1 right and three distractors that may be almost right
2. Multiple choice with more than one right:
X amount right and 3 distractors, so you have X plus three answers

Exam format (continued)

3. Exhibit questions
 - Click a button to see an example or a graphic
 - Answer the related question
4. Point and click questions
 - Click the task button (a graphic appears)
 - Click where you should on the graphic to answer the question correctly

ACE's advice:

1. "Read the FULL question and try to answer it before reading the answers.
2. Read ALL the answers even if think you know it is the first one.
3. Make the selection.

ACE's advice: (continued)

4. When you are finished, review them and only change an answer if you are absolutely sure of the new answer.

The test has a feature that allows you to mark questions — either not answered ones or ones with which you have a question. In my experience, some questions are answered by another question, so review all your answers." — Frank Harper HIDS, Incorporated (on the framers mail list, frameusers.com)

After the exam

- ☛ You immediately get your test results, showing how well you scored in different areas.
- ☛ As soon as you pass the exam, your name and exam results are sent to Adobe by Prometric.
- ☛ Your exam data is then entered into an Adobe database.

After the exam (continued)

- ☛ You will be sent an ACE Welcome Kit and access to the ACE logo.
- ☛ You are placed on the Adobe certification mailing list to receive information about promotions and events.
- ☛ There is a 25% discount for those who need to retake the exam.

ACE Welcome Kit

You'll get an ACE Welcome Kit in 4-6 weeks after your exam. The kit includes:

- ☛ A welcome letter
- ☛ A password and a link to the ACE logo and guidelines for its use
- ☛ An ACE certificate

How to stay current as an ACE

- ☛ After a new product version is released, ACEs have 90 days to get recertified.
- ☛ Contact Prometric to register for the new Product Proficiency Exam.
- ☛ Your current certification on that product is verified.
- ☛ Give the promotional code "RETEST" to the CSR, and you get a 25% discount.

Adobe Certified Training Providers (ACTP)

"The ACTP program is for individual instructors, training businesses, and academic institutions that teach Adobe products.

ACTPs have proven training ability and expert product knowledge and have met the ACTP program requirements. They are eligible to promote themselves to prospective clients and students as highly skilled, expert instructors of Adobe software." — Adobe website

How many ACEs are ACTPs also?

"About 80% of our ACEs are ACTPs"
— Carrie Cooper of Adobe.

Survey says:

☛ 9 survey respondents were ACTPs

☛ 20 were not

ACTP benefits

- ☛ Access to some Adobe products
 - Classroom in a Book PDF file downloads
 - Discounts on Adobe Press book titles
 - Discounts on Adobe software
- ☛ Monthly ASN newsletter

ACTP benefits

- ☛ Marketing help
 - Company listing in the Adobe Partner Finder on Adobe.com
 - Eligible to exhibit in the ASN Pavilion at major industry trade shows
 - Qualify to rent Adobe's mailing list of registered users
 - Access to a set of Adobe's Merchandising Tools
 - Eligible to submit a Success Story on Adobe.com

How to become an ACTP

- ☛ Fill out an on-line application
- ☛ Sign an agreement and mail it in
- ☛ Have an ACE credential
- ☛ Provide training credentials (one-time verification)

Accepted credentials

- ☛ Certified Technical Trainer Certificate of Mastery (CTT+ Certification)
- ☛ Valid teaching credential (government-issued credential)
- ☛ Valid Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT), Certified Lotus Instructor (CLI)
- ☛ Certified Novell Instructor (CNI) credential

Accepted credentials

According to Carrie Cooper, the most common credential used is the Certified Technical Trainer (CTT+) certification, followed by a government issued credential.

CTT+ credentials

CTT+ Certification is provided by CompTIA
(Computer Technology Industry Association)

"CTT+ certification is the cross-industry credential recognizing that a technical instructor has attained a standard of excellence in his or her profession. Those holding the CTT+ certification demonstrate core competencies which include instructor knowledge and credibility, classroom performance and effective communication and presentation skills."

CTT+ credentials

CTT+ is a two-part certification.

- ☛ The first exam is made up of 95 multiple-choice questions. Exam cost: \$207 US £146 229 Euro (as of the **CompTIA website May 2003**)
- ☛ The second exam is an evaluation of a twenty minute video you teaching a class. Video exam cost: \$225
- ☛ You can take the written exam at both Pearson VUE and Prometric testing centers

Multiple-choice test tips

"The FM6 test has 100 questions, all multiple choice. The questions are selected from a large bank of questions, so you could take it twice and not get the same questions. It is scored immediately."

— Frank Harper HIDS, Incorporated (on the framers mail list, frameusers.com)

ACE test strategy

- ☛ There is no penalty for guessing, so answer all the questions.
- ☛ The questions are weighted equally.

Test strategy (continued)

1. Look over the test.
 - Check out how long it is.
 - On scratch paper, write the halfway time and the halfway question number.
2. Answer easy questions first.
 - You won't miss any easy questions by running out of time.
 - It builds confidence.

Test strategy (continued)

3. Mark hard questions for return and skip them.
 - Later questions sometimes help answer earlier questions.
 - Your subconscious may work away at a hard question while you're working on easy ones.
4. Answer questions that you're sort of sure of (but not completely sure) and mark them for return.

Answering the questions

1. Read the directions carefully for each question.
How many answers should you select?
2. Read the question carefully:
 - Use the scratch pad to write key words
 - Rephrase it in your own words.
 - Compare your version with the original question.

Do they mean the same thing? If they don't, you've misread the question.

Answering the questions

(continued)

3. Once you understand the question, answer it yourself, before reading the choices.
4. Look at each choice as a True-False question.
 - Read all the choices.
 - Cross-off (mentally) the obviously false choices.
 - As you read the choices, mentally note the choices that seem the best.

Answering the questions

(continued)

5. Answer the questions from the user guide point of view.
6. If two or more choices seem correct, choose the most specific one.

For example, "You can use up to 52 different series of autonumbers" is better than "You can use more than one series of autonumbers."

Answering the questions

(continued)

7. If you have no idea of the answer, check for look-alike options and check for the one that contains the most information.
8. Don't pay attention to how many A's, B's, C's, or D's you have marked.

Checking your answers

1. Work on the hard questions you didn't answer.
2. Rework the questions you answered but were not sure of.

Since your first choice is usually correct, don't change your answer unless you're sure of the correction.

Checking your answers (continued)

3. Review all the rest of the questions if you have time.
4. Use all the time you have.

This test advice is from:

- Harvard-Westlake School website:
<http://www.harvardwestlake.com/students/studyskills/chapter6.html>
- College of Saint Benedict | Saint John's University website:
<http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/teststrt.html>

ACEs say...

...it's not just a test of your ability to out-guess the test writers, it's a test of how well you can use your product knowledge and skills to figure out the exact (as they think of it) right answer from nearly-right answers. I would not call it a breeze.

— Peter Gold (on the framers mail list, frameusers.com)

What you need to remember

- ☛ Go to the Adobe website for ACE information
- ☛ Use the exam bulletin as a study guide

Hikari Publishing
Fine distillation of information
www.hikaripub.com