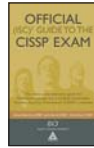


Book Review: Official (ISC)² Guide to the CISSP Exam

By Shawn Conaway



Book: Official (ISC)² Guide to the CISSP Exam

Authors: Susan Hansche, CISSP; John Berti, CISSP; Chris Hare, CISSP

Publisher: Auerbach Publications



Book: Information Security Management Handbook, 5th Edition

Authors: Various

Publisher: Auerbach Publications

BOOK RATING

Very poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

THE *Official (ISC)² Guide to the CISSP Exam* is an encyclopedic tome filled with a dizzying array of security information. The International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium (ISC)² has designed this book to help you study and pass the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) test.

The (ISC)² has identified 10 distinct areas of concentration, or domains, in the information systems security field which the (ISC)² cumulatively titled the Common Body of Knowledge (CBK). The CBK is a compendium of security information generally accepted as common knowledge to experts in the various security disciplines. The *Official (ISC)² Guide to the CISSP Exam* consists of 10 chapters that directly mirror the 10 CBK domains.

The CBK domains, the basis of the CISSP exam, are:

- ▼ Information Security Management
- ▼ Security Architecture and Models
- ▼ Access Control Systems and Methodology
- ▼ Applications and Security Development
- ▼ Operations Security
- ▼ Cryptography
- ▼ Physical Security
- ▼ Telecommunications, Network, and Internet Security
- ▼ Business Continuity Planning
- ▼ Law, Investigations, and Ethics

The chapters are concise digests that systematically review each CBK domain. Each chapter is autonomous, not relying on previous chapters for a full understanding of the covered concepts. The chapters each end with a detailed list of CBK topics and subtopics for that specific domain as well as quizzes and sample questions from previous CISSP exams. A program that contains all chapter quiz questions is included on a CD-ROM that ships with the book. The program helps

gauge CBK proficiency by scoring answers and giving the correct answers with explanations.

Like a fine bottle of Chardonnay, this volume is both complex and dry. Having too much in one sitting will give you a headache. Less like a study guide and more like a reference book, this book includes complex topics that are difficult to digest quickly. The subject matter incorporates concepts such as the different methods of synchronous and asynchronous encryption, the layers in a physical defense design, the phases of a business continuity plan, and so on. Read it early in the day or with a large cup of coffee.

Even though the study guide covers each CBK domain in depth and in detail, it is not exhaustive. A wonderful supplement is the *Information Security Management Handbook, 5th Edition*. It has over 2000 pages containing 163 articles by a variety of authors. The articles in the handbook are organized according to the 10 CBK domains, ranging from 'Computer Crime Investigation and Computer Forensics' to 'HoneyPot Essentials.' The handbook is heavy on practical examples and real-world scenarios whereas the study guide is stronger on theory and definition.

A CD-ROM version of the handbook is available which includes the 3rd, 4th, and 5th editions and supplemental material that has never appeared in print versions.

Verdict: Both books are excellent. Buy the study guide if you can only choose one book. If they save you the cost of retaking the CISSP exam (around \$500), then it is money well spent. 🍷

Shawn Conaway is a Systems Administrator for a Fortune 100 retailer. He is a current NaSPA member, a former member of the NaSPA Board of Directors, and former President of the NaSPA Education Foundation. Send questions or comments to s.conaway@naspacom.