GIAC Exam Technical Issues & Troubleshooting

It is important to ensure that you have a reliable Internet connection prior to starting any exam. This information is designed to be a starting point to help all users to be able to prevent, detect, and react to technical difficulties that may be encountered during a GIAC exam, practice exam, or assessment.

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GIAC Exam Technical Issues

Since all GIAC exams, practice exams and STAR assessments are given online, it is important to ensure that you have a reliable Internet connection prior to starting the exam. The vast majority of GIAC exams are taken over reliable Internet connections without incident. Less frequently people attempt exams from unreliable connections or experience connectivity problems during the exam. Since GIAC obviously cannot ensure the stability of every Internet connection worldwide we are providing the following information that is designed to be a starting point to help all users to be able to prevent, detect, and react to technical difficulties that may be encountered during a GIAC exam, practice exam, or assessment.

- How can I check to see if I am likely to have problems?
- You get a message saying that Javascript is turned off
- Some pages load quickly while others take a long time
- You are getting "The page cannot be displayed" error messages

How can I check to see if I am likely to have problems?

We have developed an automated test that you can use to help determine if you are likely to have problems during an exam. While nothing can predict with 100% accuracy whether you will or will not have problems, running this automated test will give you a much better idea of the likelihood. GIAC STRONGLY encourages all candidates to run this assessment test prior to taking a certification exam. We will be unable to provide you with any connectivity-related assistance unless the automated assessment was completed prior to the start of the exam.

Follow the steps shown below to run the automated assessment:

- Log into your portal account
- Go to https://portal.sans.org/assessments/math.php
- Click "Get Your Free Exam"
- Click "Practice Exams"
- Select "Automated Math Test Exam" and click the "Select Exam" button.
- Carefully read the instructions then select your network connection speed.
- Click "Start Exam"
- After the exam is finished, make a note of how long the exam took, and then click the "Home" button.

A good rule of thumb is that if the automated test takes more than 11 minutes then you are likely to have problems during the exam. In these cases you should look for items like the ones discussed below, make any necessary corrections, and then retest. In some cases it may be necessary to check during non-peak hours or simply to take your exam from another location if you are consistently seeing problems.

You get a message saying that Javascript is turned off

Problem: When getting ready to start the exam you get an error message saying that Javascript it disabled and is needed to run the exam.

Solution: You will need to enable Javascript in your browser and/or disable any script blocking plug-ins that are running.

Some pages load quickly while others take a long time

Problem: During an exam you occasionally get pages that take a long time (more than 30 seconds) to load. Other pages load normally.

Solution: This can be caused by a number of different things. They are all generally related to a lack of available bandwidth. This is generally a greater problem for dial-up and lower speed broadband users. Some things to check include:

- Ensuring that you are not concurrently downloading large files or multiple files from different locations.
- That you do not have any file sharing or peer-to-peer applications running on the desktop.
- That you do not have any additional browser windows or tabs open, especially to streaming audio or VOD sites.
- If you have a low bandwidth connection ensure that it.s not being used by other people, especially for any of the items listed above
- Remember that VOIP, VPNs, and items of that nature can be extremely bandwidth intensive.

You are getting "The page cannot be displayed" error messages

Problem: You get a "The page cannot be displayed" error after submitting an answer. It may happen consistently or occasionally.

"The page cannot be displayed" indicates that your browser cannot connect to our exam engine. This could be caused by anything from temporary loss of Internet connectivity to improperly configured proxies and firewalls. If you get this error in the middle of an exam you will need to click the refresh button to reload the page.

Verification: Go to the following sites:

http://whatismyipaddress.com
http://whatsmyip.com
http://ipaddressworld.com

If the last octet of your IP address changes for any of the above sites this is a likely indication of a load balancing firewall or proxy issue. Some organizations use multiple load balanced firewalls which makes it appear to our servers that the client machine has rolling IP address. Requests going out one firewall are routed back in through a different one and the connection is dropped as a result.

Solution: Add a persistent rule for sans.org and giac.org so that the same firewall would be used all the time.

If you experience any connectivity-related issues that are not covered here and that affected your ability to take a GIAC exam please send an email to exam-support@giac.org with the date and time you took the test, the test you took, your SD number, and a description of the problem you had. If possible please provide screen captures that show any error messages you received.