Acing the Exam

Ramis Najam

An Overview of the Exam

There are two components to your score: the role play and the exam. A high score in both these components is what is required for you to succeed. In order to accomplish this, you need to know how to best prep for them. You do not have to be the smartest; you need to be the most prepared. From my experience leading my chapter, I found that people were intimidated by the exam, and it was their weaker point. The mentality was, “I’ll get a high score on the role play to make up for the exam,” or, “I’ll just try as hard as I can when I get around to doing the actual exam.” The importance of the exam is overshadowed by the glamour of the role play, and as a result it is not practiced as often. Also, what I found was that however obvious it seems, people simply do not know how they should approach the exam to improve their scores. The answer is: just do every exam available to you. And then repeat them until you are consistently in the 90’s. Everything else I tell you builds upon the fact that you will put in the time and effort to doing all the exams available to you.

The first step: Gathering all available resources

Your chapter will have many resources available for your use. DECA Ontario also provides chapters with past exams and role plays, as well as various other training resources at the annual fall symposium. Many of the resources are also available online on the DECA Ontario website. Your job, as a competitor, is to go through all the resources available, and create a separate folder which contains every exam, role play, and prep document which is relevant to you. Once you have done this, you can rest assured that you have more than enough prep material required for every level of competition, including Internationals. It is primarily through the exams provided by DECA Ontario that I prepared for competition.

Gaining cluster knowledge

Most people get a score anywhere from the mid-50s to the low 70s on their first exam. A competitive score at Internationals, depending on your category, is generally in the low 90s. If you cannot possibly imagine getting a score in the 90s, do not fret! Getting a high score is almost exclusively dependant on how much you practice.

For many of the questions, you will not have the knowledge required to answer them. In order to gain the required understanding of the topics, I recommend familiarizing yourself with the performance indicators of your category. Going over what the indicators mean and becoming briefly acquainted with them will suffice. However, do not spend all your time going over the performance indicators! I recommend a week of intensive studying of the performance indicators, no more. It is far more efficient to familiarize yourself with the indicators by doing the exams and checking the answers to the questions you get wrong. There is always a sufficient explanation provided for each answer.
After studying the performance indicators, start doing the practice exams. Use time to your advantage; there is generally a lot of time between competitions for you to prepare. Make it your goal to do one or two exams every day, aiming to do each exam available to you at least once. You will notice that as you do more exams, your score will slowly begin to rise. Make sure to check all the answers to the questions you get wrong! This will help you familiarize yourself to that concept and get it right the next time you do it. Doing practice exams is time intensive, but it is also unbelievably rewarding when you get called up to the stage at the awards ceremony.

**Familiarize yourself with the “What are those?!”**

There are some questions that appear very frequently in the exams. Every competitor knows and fears them. These include the questions on databases, the various types of queries, different kinds of logic, etc. Having gone through many exams, I have identified some of these tough categories and listed many of them below. The sources of these ambiguous questions are listed below them. Search these sources on google and look for a link to a DECA exam, then read the explanations included with those sources. This is a sample list I made; you may want to add on to this list as you go through practice exams yourself.

**Types of Contracts**

**Types of Credit**
FI LAP 2—Give Credit Where Credit Is Due (Credit and Its Importance)

**Customer Relations**
CR LAP 1—Accentuate the Positive (Nature of Customer Relations)

**Data Management**

**Data Mining**

**Types of Reasoning**
How to do the MC tests

This is the process through which I did exams. I have explained my strategy below.

**How to do a MC Test**

1. **Answer all the easy questions**
2. **Use Advanced Strategies**
3. **Use Technical Analysis**

1. The most obvious and intuitive thing to do is to go through the test and answer all the questions you think you know the answer to.
2. After answering the easier questions, go back to the unanswered questions and spend some time thoroughly analyzing them using these advanced strategies. Here are the strategies:
   a. Go through the questions from the creator’s perspective and try to emulate the creator’s thought process while they were creating the question. This will provide another perspective that just might give you the “Aha!” you need.
   b. Reverse Q&A: Imagine that you are creating a question to match an answer. For each of the answers, think of what an intuitive question would be and that will give you an additional viewpoint to consider the questions.
   c. Assume an answer is correct and then justify why it would be correct. Then assume it is wrong and justify why it would be wrong. This will give more clarity to your thought process and help you use your intuition.
3. Technical analysis: one observation I have made is that the number of a, b, c and d answers in an exam are all approximately 25. For those few questions in which you have
no clue what the answer is, choose the answer mathematically. If there are far less a and b answers, then the answer is likely a or b. Pick an answer between these two. By extension, suppose you have narrowed down the answers between b and d. Look at the number of b’s and d’s you have chosen. If there are less b’s than d’s, then it is more likely that the answer to the question is b.

Summary

In order to succeed, once again, I recommend you do all the practice exams available to you. Start incorporating the above concepts into your exam preparation, and add any ideas of your own. It may take you only thirty exams to start getting scores above 90. Or it may take you one hundred. Regardless of what your exam score is now, you have the potential to become the first in your category simply by out-practicing your competition.