Exam Snapshot

Certification: Google Cloud Certified: Cloud Digital Leader
Issuer: Google Cloud
Exam: CDL (standard) | **Time**: 90 minutes | **Items**: 50-60 multiple-choice
Delivery: Online-proctored or onsite-proctored | **Language**: EN, JA, ES, PT, FR
Scoring: Pass/Fail (no public cut score) [VERIFY: current scoring disclosure]
Validity: 3 years | **Prereqs**: None | **Renewal**: 45 min, 20 Qs (EN/JA) [VERIFY: renewal window rules]

Domain Weights

Domain	Weight
Digital Transformation with Google Cloud	~17%
Exploring Data Transformation with Google Cloud	~16%
Innovating with Google Cloud Artificial Intelligence	~16%
Modernize Infrastructure and Applications with Google Cloud	~17%
Trust and Security with Google Cloud	~17%
Scaling with Google Cloud Operations	~17%

Core Workflow

- Start with the business outcome (speed, cost, risk, compliance, user experience) and name success measures.
- Choose the cloud model (public, private, hybrid, multicloud) and map what stays on-prem vs moves to Google Cloud.
- Apply shared responsibility: separate provider responsibilities from customer responsibilities for the chosen service model (IaaS, PaaS, SaaS).
- Pick the data approach: source data, store it (warehouse, lake, database), govern it, then make it usable for analysis.
- Select the compute and app path: rehost or modernize; decide between VMs, containers, and serverless based on constraints.
- Add trust and security controls: identity, encryption, logging, compliance needs, and data residency requirements.
- Operate at scale: cost controls (budgets, quotas), reliability (SLOs), incident response, and continuous improvement.

High-Yield Concepts

- **Cloud value words** (scalability, elasticity, agility) vs **TCO** drivers (CapEx to OpEx).
- **Regions vs zones**: geography and fault domains; latency and bandwidth shape user experience.
- **Service models** (IaaS, PaaS, SaaS) and how they change what the customer must secure and operate.
- **Shared responsibility** is about who configures, patches, and monitors each layer of the stack.
- **Data store choices**: object storage vs relational vs NoSQL; warehouse vs lake vs database.
- **Product recognition** (examples): Cloud Storage, BigQuery, Cloud SQL, Cloud Spanner, Cloud Bigtable, Firestore.
- **Data pipelines & BI** recognition: Pub/Sub, Dataflow, Looker; batch vs streaming patterns.
- **AI vs ML vs BI**: business intelligence explains and reports; ML predicts or classifies; AI is broader.
- **AI options** tradeoffs: pre-trained APIs, AutoML, or custom models on Vertex AI.
- **Modernization terms** and the migration spectrum: rehost, replatform, refactor, reimagine.
- **Compute types** recognition: VMs (Compute Engine), containers (Kubernetes), serverless (Cloud Run, App Engine, Cloud Functions).
- **Security basics** recognition: IAM, authentication vs authorization, encryption in transit/at rest, auditing/logging, DDoS concepts.

Common Traps

- Answering from an on-prem mindset (fixed capacity, fixed budgets) when the stem expects elasticity and managed services.
- Picking a product name that sounds right instead of matching the workload type, data type, and latency needs.
- Missing the shared responsibility boundary (who patches, configures, and monitors) for IaaS vs PaaS vs SaaS.
- Confusing warehouse vs lake vs database and choosing analysis tooling before storage and governance are defined.
- Using AI/ML when the stem only needs reporting, dashboards, rule-based automation, or process changes.
- Overlooking constraints like residency, cost controls (budgets/quotas), or IAM and logging when security is the core requirement.

Cheat Sheet

- **Storage quick pick**: files/blobs → Cloud Storage; OLAP analytics → BigQuery; relational apps → Cloud SQL/Spanner; wide-column scale → Bigtable; app data/documents → Firestore.
- **Pipeline quick pick**: event ingestion → Pub/Sub; transform/ETL → Dataflow; dashboards → Looker.
- **Compute quick pick**: legacy lift-and-shift → VMs; portability/microservices → containers; event-driven or bursty → serverless.
- **Migration language**: rehost (lift/shift) vs replatform (move/improve) vs refactor (rewrite parts) vs reimagine (new design).
- **Security minimums**: IAM first, then encryption, then logging/auditing; add DLP or threat detection when required [VERIFY: specific services tested].
- **Ops at scale**: resource hierarchy, budgets, quotas, monitoring, incident process, reliability targets (SLO/SLI) [VERIFY: terminology emphasis].
- **Evidence mindset**: the exam favors clear ownership, traceability, and least-privilege access decisions.

Exam-Day Tactics

- Do a first pass for easy wins; mark uncertain items and move on. Maintain steady pacing across all domains.
- Translate each stem into a one-sentence business requirement before looking at choices (cost, speed, security, compliance).
- Eliminate answers that violate constraints (data type, residency, shared responsibility, or service model).
- Prefer managed services when the stem values reduced ops overhead and faster delivery.
- Watch for subtle qualifiers: best, most cost-effective, minimal management, near real-time, highly available.
- If two answers seem right, pick the one that matches the question's first decision point (store vs process vs analyze vs secure).
- Leave time to review flagged items and confirm you did not import assumptions not stated in the stem.

30-Minute Final Review Plan

- Scan the six domain headings and weights; name the top three weak areas from recent misses.
- Rehearse the core vocab: IaaS/PaaS/SaaS, shared responsibility, regions/zones, TCO, warehouse vs lake.
- Run the product map: match 12-15 common products to a one-line use case.
- Review modernization terms (rehost, replatform, refactor) and pick the 'first move' for a legacy app scenario.
- Refresh trust basics: IAM, encryption states, authn/authz/audit, data residency, and compliance artifacts.
- Do 10-15 timed practice questions; stop to explain why each wrong option is wrong (one line each).