❄ SNOWPRO CORE

COF-C03 CERTIFICATION EXAM PREPARATION GUIDE

Premium Research Edition — 2026

Comprehensive Study Guide for Snowflake SnowPro Core Certification

Exam Code	COF-C03
Version	1.0
Publication	March 2026
Last Verified	June, 2026
Exam Cost	$175 USD (Global) / $140 USD (India)
Pass Score	750 / 1000 (Scaled)
Questions	100 (MCQ + Multi-Select + True/False)
Duration	115 Minutes
Delivery	Pearson VUE — Online or Testing Center
Validity	2 Years
Classification	Commercial Digital Asset – Premium Edition

VERSION INFORMATION

Version	Date	Description	Status
1.0	June 2026	Initial release – COF-C03 content; supersedes COF-C02 content	Current
0.9	Feb 2026	Draft aligned to COF-C03 launch (Feb 16, 2026)	Superseded

Key Updates in COF-C03 vs COF-C02

The COF-C03 version, which went live on February 16, 2026 (English), includes significant additions reflecting Snowflake's evolution as an AI Data Cloud platform:

- Snowflake Cortex AI functions (LLM-based SQL functions) added as testable content
- Iceberg Tables — open table format support within Snowflake
- Snowflake Notebooks for interactive, cell-based development
- Git Integration — syncing code repositories with Snowflake objects
- Enhanced Snowpark coverage (Python, Java, Scala in Snowflake)
- Streamlit in Snowflake — building data applications natively
- Dynamic Tables for declarative data pipeline transformations
- Updated governance features: data masking policies, row access policies, object tagging
- Expanded Marketplace and data collaboration topics

■ *Important: COF-C02 could be taken up to May 2026. COF-C03 is now the ONLY active version. Ensure all study materials reference COF-C03.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide provides a comprehensive, fact-verified preparation resource for the Snowflake SnowPro Core Certification (COF-C03). All content is derived from authoritative sources and verified as of June, 2026.

Purpose

The SnowPro Core Certification (COF-C03) is Snowflake's foundational technical certification. It validates a candidate's ability to work proficiently with the Snowflake AI Data Cloud — encompassing architecture understanding, account management, data loading and transformation, performance optimization, data governance, and connectivity. This guide synthesizes official exam blueprint content with practical knowledge to help candidates prepare thoroughly and efficiently.

Key Takeaways

Topic	Detail
Exam Code	COF-C03 — Active since February 16, 2026
Prerequisite	No formal prerequisites; 6+ months hands-on experience recommended
Format	100 questions (MCQ, Multi-Select, True/False) | 115 minutes
Pass Threshold	750/1000 scaled score
Cost	$175 USD per attempt (regional variations apply)
Validity	2 years from date of passing; recertification by passing current version
Delivery	Pearson VUE — online proctored (OnVUE) or in-person testing center
AI Coverage	COF-C03 adds Cortex AI, Iceberg, Notebooks, Git Integration

Who Should Use This Guide

- Data Engineers designing and operating Snowflake data pipelines
- Database Administrators managing Snowflake accounts and resources
- Data Architects evaluating Snowflake capabilities and best practices
- BI / Analytics Engineers building queries and data models in Snowflake
- Data Scientists using Snowpark and Cortex AI features
- Cloud Professionals migrating workloads to Snowflake

Expected Outcomes

Upon completing this guide, candidates will understand every domain tested in COF-C03, have a structured study plan, be aware of common exam traps, have access to sample practice questions, and know how to register and schedule the exam through Pearson VUE.

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CHAPTER 3 — EXAM OVERVIEW & FORMAT

All exam details below are based on the official COF-C03 version, active from February 16, 2026. Always verify the latest specifications at learn.snowflake.com before scheduling.

3.1 Certification Purpose

The SnowPro Core Certification demonstrates that an individual has the knowledge and skills to implement, manage, and optimize Snowflake solutions on the Snowflake AI Data Cloud. It validates competency across the full breadth of Snowflake's cloud-native features — from architecture and account management through to AI-powered features and data governance. It is the foundational certification and a prerequisite for all Snowflake Advanced certifications.

3.2 Exam Format

Attribute	Detail
Exam Code	COF-C03
Question Count	100 questions
Question Types	Multiple Choice, Multiple Select, True/False
Time Limit	115 minutes (approximately 1 hour 55 minutes)
Passing Score	750 on a scale of 0–1000 (scaled scoring)
Scoring Method	Scaled scoring — no minimum per-domain score required
Languages	English (Feb 16, 2026); Japanese, French, Korean (rolling from March 30, 2026)
Unscored Questions	Some questions may be unscored research items; not identified during exam
Delivery Method	Pearson VUE — Online Proctored (OnVUE) or Authorized Testing Center

■ *Exam Tip: The scaled scoring system means you do not need exactly 75% correct. Harder questions may be weighted more heavily. Focus on understanding concepts, not just memorizing answers.*

3.3 Registration & Exam Policies

Registration is managed through the Snowflake Certification Portal (learn.snowflake.com), which links to Pearson VUE for scheduling. You will need a Pearson VUE account.

Exam Cost

Region	Cost
Global (USD)	$175 USD per attempt
India	$140 USD per attempt (approximate — verify at portal)

Retake Policy

- Candidates may attempt the exam up to four times within a 12-month period.

- There is no mandatory waiting period stated for COF-C03 (verify current policy at the portal before scheduling).
- Each retake requires a separate exam fee payment.
- Passing the exam on the first attempt is strongly recommended to save cost and time.

Online Proctoring (OnVUE) Requirements

- A functioning webcam and microphone
- A private, distraction-free room
- A stable internet connection (recommended: 5 Mbps or faster)
- A valid government-issued photo ID
- No secondary monitors connected during the exam
- No notes, books, or external materials within reach

3.4 Recertification

The SnowPro Core certification is valid for 2 years from the date of passing. To recertify:

- Pass the current version of the SnowPro Core exam (COF-C03 or its successor) before the 2-year expiry.
- The recertification exam (COF-R02 equivalent for C03 era) has 60 questions, 85 minutes, and the same 750/1000 passing threshold.
- Recertification must be completed within the validity window — expired certifications may require a full re-examination.

CHAPTER 4 — TARGET AUDIENCE & PREREQUISITES

4.1 Target Roles

Role	Relevance to Exam
Data Engineer	Core audience — loading, transformation, pipelines
Database Administrator	Account mgmt, security, warehouses, monitoring
BI / Analytics Engineer	Query tuning, views, semi-structured data, Snowsight
Data Architect	Architecture layers, design patterns, editions, scaling
Data Scientist	Snowpark, Cortex AI, ML integration, Notebooks
Cloud Professional	Multi-cloud support, stages, replication, Marketplace
Data Governance Specialist	Masking policies, row access, object tagging, auditing

4.2 Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for the SnowPro Core exam. However, Snowflake recommends the following practical preparation level:

- At least 6 months of hands-on experience working with the Snowflake platform
- Familiarity with SQL fundamentals (DDL, DML, basic query patterns)
- Understanding of cloud computing concepts (AWS, Azure, GCP basics)
- Experience with data loading, querying, and basic performance concepts
- Access to a Snowflake trial account for hands-on practice

■ *Important: Candidates who study theory alone without hands-on practice frequently struggle with scenario-based questions. Snowflake provides a free 30-day trial account at snowflake.com/try — use it extensively during study.*

CHAPTER 5 — DOMAIN BLUEPRINT & WEIGHTINGS

The following domain structure is based on the official COF-C02 study guide (last updated May 8, 2025) and COF-C03 content updates effective February 2026. The six-domain structure is preserved across both versions.

5.1 Domain Summary

#	Domain	Weight	Difficulty	Priority
1	Snowflake AI Data Cloud Features & Architecture	25%	Medium–High	★★★★★
2	Account Access & Security	20%	Medium	★★★★★
3	Performance & Cost Optimization	15%	High	★★★★
4	Data Loading & Transformation	20%	Medium	★★★★★
5	Data Protection & Data Sharing	10%	Medium	★★★
6	Data Pipelines & New Features (COF-C03 emphasis)	10%	Medium–High	★★★★
	TOTAL	100%		

Note: Domain weights are approximate and based on the COF-C02 official exam guide and COF-C03 community-verified sources. Snowflake states these are ranges, not exact figures.

5.2 Priority Matrix — Where to Focus

Domains 1, 2, and 4 together account for approximately 65% of the exam. Master these first. The table below provides a recommended study prioritization:

Study Order	Domain	Why High Priority
1st	Architecture (D1)	Highest weight; foundational to all other domains
2nd	Data Loading (D4)	Heavily tested; practical and scenario-rich
3rd	Security (D2)	RBAC/governance concepts appear across all domains
4th	Performance (D3)	Complex; requires hands-on understanding
5th	Pipelines / AI (D6)	COF-C03 new content; growing in importance
6th	Data Protection (D5)	Smaller weight; but Time Travel is frequently tested

CHAPTER 6 — DOMAIN 1: ARCHITECTURE & FEATURES (25%)

This is the highest-weighted domain. It tests your deep understanding of Snowflake's unique multi-cluster, shared-data architecture — separating storage, compute, and cloud services into independent layers.

6.1 Snowflake's Three-Layer Architecture

Snowflake's core architectural innovation is the separation of its platform into three independently scalable layers:

Layer	Description	Key Responsibility
Cloud Services	Brain of Snowflake. Coordinates all activity.	Authentication, metadata mgmt, query optimization, infrastructure mgmt,access control
Query Processing	Virtual Warehouses (compute clusters).	SQL execution, data processing; can scale up/out independently
Database Storage	Centralized columnar storage in cloud object store	Stores all data as micro-partitions; automatically managed

■ *Exam Tip: Exam frequently tests: What happens when you suspend a Virtual Warehouse? Answer: Compute stops billing; cloud services and storage continue. No data is lost.*

6.2 Virtual Warehouses (Compute Layer)

Virtual Warehouses are clusters of compute resources that execute SQL queries. They are completely independent of storage and can be created, scaled, and suspended without affecting data.

Warehouse Sizes

Size	Credits/Hour	Use Case
X-Small	1	Development, small queries
Small	2	Light workloads
Medium	4	General analytics
Large	8	Heavier workloads
X-Large	16	Complex queries, large data volumes
2X-Large	32	High-concurrency, large batch jobs
3X-Large	64	Enterprise-scale workloads
4X-Large	128	Largest available; extreme scale
5X-Large+	256+	Preview sizes; availability varies by region

Scaling Policies

- **Standard (default)**: Snowflake adds clusters when there is queuing detected; removes after no activity for consecutive periods (default: 2–3 cycles).
- **Economy**: Conserves credits by starting clusters only when they improve utilization by at least 6 minutes of work.
- Multi-cluster warehouses require Snowflake Enterprise edition or above.
- AUTO_SUSPEND sets idle time before automatic suspension (minimum: 60 seconds, recommended: 60–300 for interactive; longer for batch).
- AUTO_RESUME automatically restarts the warehouse on the next query submission.

■ *Exam Tip: Exam trap: AUTO_SUSPEND does NOT delete data or affect storage. Billing stops for compute only. Cloud Services layer always remains active.*

6.3 Storage Layer — Micro-Partitions

Snowflake stores all data as micro-partitions: automatically managed, compressed, columnar storage files in cloud object storage (AWS S3, Azure Blob, GCP GCS).

- Each micro-partition is 50–500 MB of uncompressed data (typically 16 MB compressed)
- Data is stored in columnar format within each micro-partition for efficient analytical query performance
- Each micro-partition stores metadata: min/max values per column, distinct count, null count
- Snowflake uses this metadata for partition pruning — eliminating irrelevant micro-partitions without scanning
- Micro-partitions are immutable; updates/deletes create new micro-partitions and mark old ones as deleted
- Automatic clustering maintains the natural sort order of data as inserted

6.4 Snowflake Object Hierarchy

Snowflake organizes objects in a strict hierarchical model:

Level	Object	Description
1	Organization	Top-level container; spans multiple accounts (Snowflake Business Critical+)
2	Account	Primary unit; contains all objects, users, and data in a region/cloud
3	Database	Logical container for schemas; maps to a data domain or application
4	Schema	Logical grouping of tables, views, stages, and other objects
5	Table/View	Actual data objects within a schema

6.5 Table Types

Table Type	Persistence	Time Travel	Fail-Safe	Use Case
Permanent	Until dropped	0–90 days	7 days	Production data
Transient	Until dropped	0–1 day	None	Staging, temp data to save storage cost
Temporary	Session only	0–1 day	None	ETL intermediate results; auto-dropped at session end
External	External store	None	None	Read-only access to data in cloud storage stages

■ *Exam Tip: Exam frequently tests: Which table type has NO Fail-Safe? Answer: Temporary and Transient. Permanent tables have 7-day Fail-Safe. Transient = 0 Fail-Safe, 1-day Time Travel max.*

6.6 View Types

View Type	Definition Stored	Result Cached	Security	Key Feature
Standard View	Yes (SQL only)	No	Normal	No performance benefit; just abstraction
Materialized View	Yes + pre-computed	Yes (auto-refreshed)	Normal	Faster queries; incremental maintenance; credits consumed for maintenance
Secure View	Yes (hidden SQL)	No	SQL hidden	Prevents data inference; disables some optimizer features
Secure Mat. View	Yes (hidden SQL)	Yes	SQL hidden	Combines materialized performance with security

6.7 Snowflake Editions

Edition	Multi-Cluster WH	Time Travel Max	Fail-Safe	Data Masking	Business Critical Features
Standard	No	1 day	Yes (7d)	No	No
Enterprise	Yes	90 days	Yes (7d)	No	No
Business Critical	Yes	90 days	Yes (7d)	Yes	Yes (HIPAA, PCI-DSS, encryption)
Virtual Private	Yes	90 days	Yes (7d)	Yes	Dedicated metadata store; highest isolation

■ *Exam Tip: Exam trap: Dynamic Data Masking and Row Access Policies require Enterprise edition or above. Standard edition does NOT support these features.*

CHAPTER 7 — DOMAIN 2: ACCOUNT ACCESS & SECURITY (20%)

Security is the second highest-weighted domain. Expect questions on RBAC, authentication methods, network policies, data governance, and encryption. Many questions are scenario-based.

7.1 Authentication Methods

Method	Description	Use Case
Username/Password	Basic credential-based login	Development; not recommended for production
Multi-Factor Auth (MFA)	TOTP-based second factor via Duo	Recommended for human users
Single Sign-On (SSO)	SAML 2.0 integration with IdP	Enterprise users via Okta, Azure AD, etc.
Key Pair Auth	RSA private/public key authentication	Service accounts, Snowflake CLI, drivers
OAuth	Delegated authorization standard	BI tools, third-party app integrations
External OAuth	OAuth with external authorization server	Custom token-based integrations

7.2 Role-Based Access Control (RBAC)

Snowflake implements RBAC as its primary access control model. Access is controlled through roles, which are assigned to users and granted privileges on objects.

System-Defined Roles

Role	Description	Inherited By
ORGADMIN	Manages organization-level features	No default inheritance
ACCOUNTADMIN	Top-level account role; all privileges	Inherits SYSADMIN + SECURITYADMIN
SECURITYADMIN	Manages users and all roles	Inherits USERADMIN
SYSADMIN	Creates warehouses, databases, objects	No default above
USERADMIN	Creates/manages users and roles	No default above
PUBLIC	Default role for all users; minimal privs	Granted to every user automatically

■ *Exam Tip: Key exam concept: ACCOUNTADMIN should NOT be used for day-to-day operations. Create custom roles. All custom roles should eventually inherit from SYSADMIN for object ownership purposes.*

Privilege Hierarchy Principle

- Privileges are granted on objects (databases, schemas, tables, warehouses) to roles.
- Roles are granted to users or to other roles (role hierarchy).
- A user's effective privileges are the union of all privileges from all their active roles.
- Object ownership is a special privilege; owners can grant/revoke privileges on owned objects.

• USAGE privilege on a database and schema is required before table-level access is meaningful.

7.3 Network Policies

Network policies restrict account or user access to specific IP address ranges, adding an additional security layer.

• Created at account level using CREATE NETWORK POLICY.

• Can be applied at account level (affects all users) or user level (overrides account policy for that user).

• Specify allowed IP ranges using CIDR notation (e.g., 192.168.1.0/24).

• Blocked IP ranges can also be explicitly defined.

• Only SECURITYADMIN and ACCOUNTADMIN can create and manage network policies.

```
CREATE NETWORK POLICY corp_vpn_policy ALLOWED_IP_LIST = ('10.0.0.0/8', '192.168.0.0/16')
BLOCKED_IP_LIST = ('192.168.1.100');
```

7.4 Data Masking & Column-Level Security

Dynamic Data Masking (requires Enterprise+) allows conditional masking of column values based on the querying role, without changing underlying data.

• Masking policies are defined as SQL expressions that return the masked or original value.

• Applied at the column level — multiple columns can use the same policy.

• The underlying data is never altered; the masking is applied at query time.

• Row Access Policies (Enterprise+) control which rows a user can see based on their role or attributes.

• Object Tagging allows metadata labels to be attached to Snowflake objects for governance and classification.

■ *Exam Tip: Exam frequently tests: Which edition supports Dynamic Data Masking? Enterprise and above ONLY. Standard edition does not support it.*