



IBM Z Xplore

Sponsored by: *Farmers Insurance*

Contest Overview and Components

The Z Xplore competition is a progressive set of tasks to be completed by individuals that will include: logging in to a mainframe environment using z/OS; using ISPF to modify and submit JCL; checking the status of JES jobs by investigating SDSF; compiling and running programs written in a variety of programming languages; performing some system administrator tasks such as modifying security settings; and logging on to and interacting with zLinux, z/VM. The challenges are designed such that a student with no mainframe experience can succeed – all necessary tools will be introduced along the way!

Students will be given the problem statement at the beginning of the contest time. Time will be allowed to read the problem statement and ask any questions in a common session. Further questions will be permitted at any point during the contest. At the end of the contest period, the judging team will inspect each student's work on the mainframe for grading. The contest is divided into "Challenges" and those who complete the most Challenges correctly gain more points.

Teams will want to have the necessary tools (*Vista emulator and SSH client*) preloaded on their machines prior to the competition. These are quick installs and students are encouraged to compete in the contest even if they haven't already installed the software.

Contest Note: students must be capable of saving their submissions on a USB flash drive from their personal computers.

Team Composition

This is an individual participant event – teams are limited to ONE student.

Skills

Any and all mainframe skills needed to do well in this contest will be presented as you go. Experience with programming in a language such as C++ or Java is preferred, but a motivated student with no prior programming experience can do very well in this contest. Students wishing to be successful should have an inquisitive nature and a drive to succeed.

An automated exec, which can be run by the contestants at any point as they work through the contest, will show completion status of each challenge in the contest. Points will be given for successful and correct completion of challenges. In case of a tie, the winners' partial, incomplete, or incorrect submissions will be analyzed and partial points will be given for attempted but incorrect challenges. Grading will be done by a judge with several years of experience grading the *Master the Mainframe* contest.

In the event of multiple students completing the entire contest 100% correctly, the student to complete the contest first will be given the win.

Schedule

See contest schedule for contest time and place. The time will include contest overview, contest work and turn in.

Check in will begin 20 minutes before the contest begins.

Resources

Tom Brennan's Vista emulator will be provided for contestants to connect to and interact with z/OS and z/VM running on the mainframe.

Students may download and install the emulator ahead of time to test their connection to the mainframe. This step will save some time at the beginning of the contest but is not required as the installation only takes a few minutes.

Students need access to a SSH client to connect to zLinux on the mainframe – for students running Windows. PuTTY is a recommended free software and an executable will be provided at the start of the contest. For students running Linux or Mac, OpenSSH is generally installed on the workstation by default. An Internet browser will be required to view contest instructions as well as to complete challenges.

Students are encouraged to use any online resources they wish, including Google, to learn and complete the challenges.