In March 2012, I got certified under CEH v7 certification. (EC1-350). It was indeed a tough exam. Since a lot of people are asking me on the guide lines for clearing this exam, I decided to put them down for you.

Study Material:

Books:

I studied about four books directly related to CEH exam. These are:

- CEH Certified Ethical Hacker Study Guide by Kimberly Graves (ISBN-13: 978-0470525203)
- CEH: Official Certified Ethical Hacker by Kimberly Graves (ISBN-13: 978-0782144376)
- Certified Ethical Hacker Exam Prep by Michael Gregg (ISBN-13: 978-0789735317)
- CEH Certified Ethical Hacker All-in-One Exam Guide by Matt Walker (ISBN-13: 978-0071772297)

In addition to the books mentioned above, I also studied some extra books:

- Practical Packet Analysis: Using Wireshark to Solve Real-World Network Problems by Chris Sanders (ISBN-10: 1593272669 | ISBN-13: 978-1593272661)
- BackTrack 5 Wireless Penetration Testing Beginner's Guide by Vivek Ramachandran (ISBN-10: 1849515581 | ISBN-13: 978-1849515580)
- BackTrack 4: Assuring Security by Penetration Testing by Shakeel Ali , Tedi Heriyanto (ISBN-10: 1849513945 | ISBN-13: 978-1849513944)
- Nmap Network Scanning: The Official Nmap Project Guide to Network Discovery and Security Scanning by (Gordon Fyodor Lyon) (ISBN-10 : 0-9799587-1-7 | ISBN-13 978-0-9799587-1-7)
- Hacking Exposed (5th Edition) (ISBN: 007226081-5)

Out of the four CEH books, I liked the All-in-One Guide by Matt Walker, and Exam Prep by

Micheal Gregg. It must be noted that only the All-in-One by Matt Walker is the book updated with CEH v7 content. I did not find Kimberly's books any useful at all. You opinion and experience may differ.

The extra books mentioned above have been a real help. I really recommend everyone to read them in addition to any CEH exam guide you may be studying. Each book mentioned above took 10-15 days of mine, including any practice needed to learn the tools and techniques. I studied for 8-10 hours a day. That makes 80 - 120 days of book study.

Security tools:

Following are few Linux Distributions, which I really like, and recommend to everyone. They contain a lot of tools, which will help you practice various concepts mentioned in books, and various websites on the Internet.

- BackTrack Linux (http://www.backtrack-linux.org/)
- Fedora Security Lab (http://spins.fedoraproject.org/security/)
- STD - Security Tools Distribution (http://s-t-d.org/)

Study plan:
Step 1:

Study each book (study guide /exam guide), chapter by chapter. Normally one chapter a day. Attempt sample questions at the end of each chapter (of each study / exam guide), and keep the record of your score. Also make a list of your weak areas. (10 - 15 days per book).

Step 2:

Attempt the sample exam at the end of Gregg's Exam Prep book. Make a record of score and note weak areas. (2-3 hours, one day)

Step 3:

When you finish all the CEH specific study/exam guides, then study the side books listed above. (10 -15 days per book).

Step 4:

Watch various videos on YouTube, etc, related to the topics you are weak in. This step can be done in parallel to Step 1 and Step 2. This is also a good way to kill boredom while studying. There are a few interesting channels on YouTube, which explain some concepts in light ways. Hak5.org is a website, which has it's youtube channel as well. The show may not explain anything really in depth, but is a good source to touch up and to know a lot of things, small and big alike. There are other channels and people as well, who have put up good information on various websites. I watched this show just for a change of taste / kill boredom.

Step 5:

Study the All-in-One exam guide by Matt again, from first chapter to the last, optionally taking any notes. Attempt the sample exam "quiz" provided on the CD, which comes with this book. Record your score. (The software only installs/runs on windows :( ) . (1 - 3 days, total).

Step 6:

Cover your weak areas identified in Step 5, and then attempt the sample "master exam" provided on the same CD which comes with Matt's All-in-One exam guide. (The software only installs/runs on windows :( ) (4 hours, 1 day)

Helpful tools and tips:

Make sure you play a lot with various security tools and penetration / hacking tools, for both Linux and Windows. You must be very well versed with tcpdump, wireshark, nmap, netcat, snort, etc. You must be absolutely clear on how to capture packets, and how to extract information out of them. You must be absolutely clear on various scan types and various flags, including their binary and hexadecimal representation. You must be good in programming in C and C++, etc.

Exam code, exam cost, course outline:

CEH (v7) has exam code of EC1-350. Exam itself is 500 USD. If you did not take official training from any of the CEH certified instructors / institutes, and studied at your own, like me, then you have to submit an "Eligibility Application Form" to EC-Council, with an additional fee of 100 USD. That makes a total of 600 USD, making it an expensive exam.

EC-Council has provided a CEH handbook, in PDF form, which can be downloaded, and printed. It contains the complete course outline / exam blue-print. It also contains all the application forms, etc, as well as FAQs. It is available on EC-Council's website http://eccouncil.org.

Conclusion:

If you follow the above study plan, it will take 3-5 months for you to prepare for CEH exam. Remember, the above plan worked for me. And the books I chose worked for me. By no means you should take it as granted, that Matt's All-in-One exam guide, is all you need! (Even Matt's All-in-One guide has errors in it). You need to have a lot of experience, and rock-solid concepts in Information System Security field.

CEH exam is 4 hours+ computer based multiple choice exam . Be patient during the exam. May success be with you. Ameen. Good Luck!