

Top certifications for IT careers

As the tech industry continues to grow and diversify, the demand for IT jobs continues to rise. Completing a certification in IT can be the key to unlocking a wide range of [career pathways](#) in tech.

Many IT careers offer a high degree of job stability and security, with the majority commanding high salaries as well. In this guide, we provide an overview of different IT certifications and how to choose the right one for your [career goals](#).

What is an IT certification?

An information technology or IT certification provides you with knowledge in a specific area of IT. Whether you're wanting to break into the industry or you're a seasoned IT professional [looking to upskill](#), there are IT certifications out there to suit. There are also a number of different educational pathways for getting [IT certifications](#), including that allow you to study online through self-directed modules.

As for how long it takes to complete an IT certification – that depends on the individual certification and the knowledge you already have. Some certifications can be completed with just a [few weeks of study](#), if you're already familiar with the subject. Other certifications can take anywhere from six to 18 months to complete.

Benefits of IT certifications

No matter where you are in your career as an IT professional, completing IT certifications can offer a range of benefits. Here are just some of the advantages that come with IT certifications:

- **Career advancement:** a certification can enhance your resumé and make you a more attractive job applicant. This can potentially lead to better job opportunities and career growth.
- **Skill development:** to gain new certifications you likely have to learn more

practical skills in your field. If you're regularly getting new certifications, you can stay up to date with the latest developments in your specialisation.

- **Specialised knowledge:** by getting more IT certifications, you're exposed to more fields of knowledge, so you can choose a focus area of expertise – or diversify.
- **Increased earning potential:** certified professionals are often able to attract higher salaries. You can also use certifications as a factor in salary negotiations and increases.
- **Global recognition:** many certifications are globally recognised, allowing you to showcase your skills on an international level. This opens up work opportunities in different regions around the world.

Importance of choosing the right IT certifications

Whether you're looking to fulfil certain career goals or develop specific skills, choosing the best IT certification can be a step in the right direction. Here are a few tips to help you pick the right IT certification for you:

- **Start with your career goals.** Spend time defining your [career objectives](#). From here you can identify the specific roles or areas within IT that interest you the most. Explore the job requirements of your preferred roles to identify any skill gaps. Use this information to guide your choice of certifications.
- **Assess your strengths and interests.** When it comes to choosing the right IT certifications, it can help to play to your strengths and interests, as long as they align with your professional goals. Choosing a certification in an area that you enjoy can help to make the learning process more engaging.
- **Aim high.** Rather than starting from the bottom up, chase higher-level certifications. If you already have the relevant foundational skills and can aim for a more advanced certification, it makes sense to get a few steps ahead.
- **Become an expert.** Once you've found an area of IT that interests you and aligns with your goals, focus on moving up the certification chart until you reach the most advanced level.
- **Maintain certification requirements.** Some certifications require ongoing education or periodic exams for renewal. Make sure to stay on top of your certifications so you can get the most out of them.

Best IT certifications

With so many different IT certifications out there, finding the best one comes down to where you are in your career. From foundational IT courses to the most advanced credentials, here are some of the top IT certifications.

CompTIA A+

[CompTIA A+](#) is a globally recognised entry-level IT certification. It's ideal for people who are interested in pursuing a career in IT, and provides foundational skills and knowledge required for more advanced IT certifications. The courses cover a broad range of IT concepts and technologies, rather than focusing on specific products or platforms.

CompTIA also offers several other IT certifications like:

- [CompTIA Cloud+](#),
- [CompTIA Security+](#), and
- [CompTIA Linux+](#).

Prerequisites: there are no official prerequisites for [CompTIA A+](#), but it's recommended to have nine to 12 months of hands-on experience in the lab or field.

Potential roles: a [CompTIA A+](#) certification can help you land a number of IT support positions, including:

- Help desk technician
- IT specialist
- Field service technician
- [IT support manager](#)
- [Technical support specialist](#)

Average salary: [IT technicians](#) can expect an average salary of between \$70,000 to \$75,000.

CompTIA Network+

[CompTIA Network+](#) is designed to develop your skills and knowledge relating to IT infrastructure. This certification covers troubleshooting, configuring and managing networks. As the only certification that covers the specific skills that network

professionals need, CompTIA Network+ is an essential certification for people wanting to become a network specialist or seeking to strengthen their foundational IT networking skills.

Prerequisites: although there are no requirements, it's generally recommended that you have either completed the CompTIA A+ certification or have the equivalent knowledge and experience before pursuing a CompTIA Network+.

Potential roles: by completing a CompTIA Network+, you could land a role as a:

- Network security operator
- Network security analyst
- [Security architect](#)
- [Data architect](#)
- [Network specialist](#)
- [Solutions architect](#)
- [Cyber security analyst](#)

Average salary: [data architects](#) can expect to earn an average annual salary of \$155,000 to \$175,000.

Microsoft Fundamentals

Microsoft offers a range of [fundamental IT certifications](#). These entry-level certifications provide a practical yet detailed overview of the different Microsoft technologies. They include:

- Microsoft 365 Fundamentals
- Microsoft Azure Fundamentals
- Microsoft Azure AI Fundamentals
- Microsoft Azure Data Fundamentals

Prerequisites: while the fundamental certifications don't have any prerequisites for study, it's generally recommended that you have an understanding of basic IT concepts and challenges.

Potential roles: a Microsoft Fundamentals certification could help you to secure a number of different roles like:

- [Infrastructure specialist](#)
- IT support specialist

- [Systems engineer](#)
- [Automation engineer](#)
- [Support developer](#)

Average salary: [technical specialists](#) can attract an average salary of between \$110,000 to \$130,000.

AWS Cloud Practitioner

The [AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner](#) is an entry-level certification offered by Amazon Web Services (AWS) and is designed to provide a foundational understanding of AWS cloud services. This certification is for people with non-technical backgrounds or those in technical roles who require a basic understanding of the AWS Cloud.

Prerequisites: no prior IT or cloud experience is required.

Potential roles: as an AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner, you qualify for a number of roles including:

- AWS cloud architect
- SysOps administrator
- [Cloud developer](#)
- Cloud DevOps engineer
- AWS networking specialist
- [Cloud software engineer](#)

Average salary: [operations engineers](#) are paid an average annual salary of \$100,000 to \$120,000.

GIAC Information Security Fundamentals (GISF)

Offered by the Global Information Assurance Certification (GIAC), the [GIAC Information Security Fundamentals \(GISF\)](#) certification is designed for IT professionals who are new to the field of information security. It helps them establish a foundational understanding of essential security concepts. The GISF certification covers a range of topics including a basic overview of:

- information security,
- security policies and procedures,
- risk management and incident response, and

- the basics of network security.

Prerequisites: there are no prerequisites for this course. However, GIAC recommends practical work experience to help master the skills necessary to pass the certification exam.

Potential roles: some jobs you could apply for after completing a GIAC Information Security Fundamentals (GISF) certification include:

- Cyber assessor
- Cyber security manager
- Cyber security incident handler
- Incident response analyst
- Solutions architect

Average salary: [Information security analysts](#) can attract a salary of \$100,000 to \$120,000.

Certified ScrumMaster (CSM)

The [Certified ScrumMaster \(CSM\)](#) is a certification offered by Scrum Alliance, one of the prominent organisations in the field of Agile and Scrum methodologies. The CSM certification is designed for people who want to become Scrum Masters and work within an Agile team.

Prerequisites: there are no prerequisites for joining the CSM certification, but participants must complete a two-day training course before attempting the certification exam.

Potential roles: with a CSM certification, you can pursue a range of roles, including

- [Scrum master](#)
- [Project manager](#)
- [Business analyst](#)

Average salary: the average annual salary for a scrum master ranges from \$125,000 to \$145,000.

PMI Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)

The [Certified Associate in Project Management \(CAPM\)](#) is a certification offered by the

Project Management Institute (PMI). It's designed for professionals who are relatively new to project management, giving them an understanding of fundamental project management concepts and terminology. As an entry-level certification, the CAPM serves as a stepping stone for those looking to pursue more advanced project management certifications like the Project Management Professional (PMP).

Prerequisites: to sit for the exam, you must have a secondary degree, like the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE), and at least 23 hours of project management education.

Potential roles: after completing a CAPM, you can land a role as a:

- Project manager
- [Project coordinator](#)
- Business analyst
- IT project analyst
- PMO specialist
- Resource coordinator

Average salary: project managers can earn an average annual salary of \$150,000.

Linux Essentials Certification

The [Linux Essentials Professional Development Certificate \(PDC\)](#) is an entry-level certification provided by the Linux Professional Institute (LPI). It's for people who are new to Linux, providing a foundational understanding of essential concepts. This certification covers the basics of hardware, processes, programs and the components of the Linux Operating System, system security and how to create and run simple scripts.

Prerequisites: there are no prerequisites for this certification.

Potential roles: Linux skills can help you to excel in a range of IT jobs including:

- developer positions,
- administrator roles, and
- engineering jobs, like cloud architects, data analysts and networking engineers.

Average salary: [infrastructure engineers](#) can command a salary in the range of \$115,000 to \$135,000.

Whether you're an aspiring IT professional or an industry veteran, IT certifications can help you supercharge your career. Aside from validating your skills and knowledge, an IT certification can open up exciting job opportunities and keep you at the leading edge of your specialisation.

FAQs

What is the highest IT certification?

There are a number of different IT certifications that are highly regarded, including:

- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP),
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM),
- Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE),
- Amazon Web Services Certified Solutions Architect – Professional (AWS CSA-Pro), and
- Red Hat Certified Architect (RHCA), to name a few.

The Professional and Expert levels are often the highest IT certifications offered. These certifications require a combination of high-level skills, expert knowledge and determination. With that said, these certifications can reward graduates with access to high-paying positions.

Can I get an IT job with just certifications?

It's definitely possible to land a job in IT with just a certificate qualification. Many basic certificates can provide you with enough skills to land an entry-level IT role. While there are generally no prerequisites for these types of courses, it often helps to have a few months of IT experience under your belt.

Which CompTIA certification pays the most?

Out of all the CompTIA certifications on offer, the CompTIA Security+ and CompTIA CYSA+ (Cybersecurity Analyst) both have the potential to open up opportunities for IT

professionals to land high-paying jobs. A CompTIA Security+ or CompTIA CYSA+ certification can help you get a role as a network architect, which has an average annual salary of \$153,000.

What are the easiest computer certifications to get?

Some of the easiest IT certifications to complete are:

- CompTIA A+,
- Microsoft Technology Associate,
- VMware Certified Associate,
- Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician, and
- TIL Foundation qualifications.

These entry-level certifications provide foundational skills that are ideal for IT beginners.