

Building a Cybersecurity Career:

Foundational Certifications & DoD 8140/8150 Workforce Requirements

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Instructions:

What avenues should an aspiring information security professional use in acquiring professional credentials? Cite resources and references that back up your recommendations. You can watch the following videos to help answer this topic:

1. Expect Career Success with CompTIA Security+:
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efjm7j4WeXE>
2. Top 10 IT Certifications for Security Cleared Professionals:
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptVOp9KKnKU>
3. DoDD 8140 - Cyberspace Workforce Management:
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovfxanMTJzU>

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Aspiring information security professionals should pursue credentials through two primary avenues: establishing a recognized foundational skill set and aligning their training with key government and industry workforce mandates (Peters, 2025).

Building a Foundational Skill Set

The first step is obtaining vendor-neutral certifications that provide a broad foundation and solid grounding in cybersecurity concepts (Solomon, 2021).

- CompTIA Security+ is a highly sought-after entry-level credential and among the most common certifications held by security-cleared professionals (CompTIA, n.d.; Infosec, 2024a). It provides a broad spectrum of security knowledge, from cryptography to network security. International organizations and governments (such as the Department of Defense (DoD) and the FBI) explicitly recognize the Security+ as a valuable certification.
- CompTIA A+ and Network+: I discuss these two certifications in length on my website (Locky, 2025). I recommend studying and earning these certifications **BEFORE** the Security+ because they give students the tools to *better prepare for the Security+* while also *diving into and covering other IT subjects related to cybersecurity roles* (Infosec, 2024a). They are usually not required by potential employers, but **they greatly help one's career** while also supporting the building and maintenance of personal SOHO environments (Locky, 2025).

Alignment and Compliance with Workforce Mandates

A more strategic path is to choose and pursue credentials required by government and defense policies, because, on average, certified and cleared professionals earn 10-30% higher salaries than their non-credential/cleared colleagues in their respective fields (Bouchrika, 2025). Desired and respected specialized certifications include the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) and Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) (Solomon, 2021).

- DoD Compliance: DoD Directive 8570, which is being superseded by DoD 8140, requires government employees and contractors with privileged access to federal networks to hold specific certifications to ensure they are qualified and trained for roles like Information Assurance Technician and Manager. Professionals must research which certifications fulfill these requirements for their desired role (Federal News Network, 2016; DoD, 2023; Infosec, 2024b).
- Advanced Credentials: For more senior roles, pursue credentials that satisfy these mandates, such as the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP). The CISSP is approved as a baseline certification for several advanced roles under DoD 8570 and remains recognized under DoD 8140. The CISSP is also a globally respected and accepted advanced security certification (Federal News Network, 2016; DoD, 2023; Infosec, 2024b).
- Framework Alignment: The DoD's system is evolving to align with the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) framework, which breaks security jobs into seven categories and 32 specialty areas. Aspiring professionals should use this framework to determine the specific training, education, and experience needed for their targeted specialization (Federal News Network, 2016; DoD, 2023; Infosec, 2024b).

Conclusion

By following these structured pathways, aspiring cybersecurity professionals can build a competitive, industry-aligned skill set that supports long-term career growth. In sum, seasoned professionals and industry-focused organizations typically recommend that potential candidates build a solid foundation (e.g., A+, Network+, and Security+) before specializing in their target or desired role(s). Afterward, potential candidates should ensure their credentials align with recognized frameworks (e.g., DoD 8140) to maximize employability and compliance.

References

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