



# Most Popular IT Certifications (2026)

Career-boosting credentials across cloud, security, DevOps, networking, and project management. Updated with latest salary insights and hiring trends.

📅 Data: April 2026 | In-demand & future-proof



## Top IT Certifications at a Glance

Certification	Category	Level	Avg. Salary (US)	Key Benefit
<b>AWS Solutions Architect – Professional</b>	Cloud	Professional	\$170k–\$210k	Top-tier cloud architecture
<b>Google Professional Cloud Architect</b>	Cloud	Professional	\$180k–\$200k	High-paying, AI/ML focus
<b>CISSP</b>	Security	Advanced	\$150k–\$180k	"Gold standard" cybersecurity

Certification	Category	Level	Avg. Salary (US)	Key Benefit
<b>CISM</b>	Security	Advanced	\$145k–\$175k	Security management & leadership
<b>PMP</b>	Project Mgmt	Advanced	\$120k–\$140k	Highest-paying non-technical cert
<b>CKA (Kubernetes)</b>	DevOps	Intermediate	High demand	Hands-on container orchestration
<b>AWS Solutions Architect – Associate</b>	Cloud	Associate	~\$99k	Most impactful cloud cert
<b>CompTIA Security+</b>	Security	Entry	\$75k–\$85k	Best entry to cybersecurity
<b>Cisco CCNA</b>	Networking	Entry	—	Networking gold standard
<b>CompTIA A+</b>	Fundamentals	Entry	~\$84k	Best starting point for IT

Source: QA, Robert Half, Digital Cloud Training 2025–2026



## Cloud Computing Certifications (Top Picks 2026)



## AWS Solutions Architect – Associate

Most broadly impactful cloud cert. Design secure, scalable AWS systems. Foundation for advanced roles.

💰 ~\$99k avg



## Google Professional Cloud Architect

\$180k–\$200k — ideal for GCP + AI/ML environments. Fastest-growing cloud cert in 2026.

🤖 AI/ML edge



## Azure Solutions Architect Expert

\$160k–\$200k — essential for Microsoft enterprises. Deep integration with M365 & Power Platform.



## AWS Certified AI Practitioner

New “career accelerator” — cloud fundamentals + generative AI awareness. Perfect complement to associate-level cloud certs.

🔥 Trending 2026

💡 **Pro tip:** The winning combo for 2026: **AWS Solutions Architect Associate + AWS AI Practitioner** — future-proof your cloud career.



## Cybersecurity & Networking



### CompTIA Security+

Entry point gold standard. Covers threats, risk management, incident response. Often first job requirement for SOC analysts.

 DoD approved



### CISSP (Senior)

Gold standard for experienced pros (5+ years). 8 security domains, management & strategy.

 \$150k-\$180k



### Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)

Offensive security & pen testing. Learn attack vectors, earn \$135k-\$155k. Great for red team roles.



### Cisco CCNA / CCNP

CCNA: networking fundamentals + AI/ML concepts. CCNP: advanced enterprise (\$168k avg). Still unmatched for infrastructure roles.



## DevOps & Platform Engineering



### Certified Kubernetes Administrator (CKA)

Fully hands-on practical exam. Real-world cluster management, microservices orchestration. Most respected K8s cert.

 100% performance-based



### HashiCorp Terraform Associate

Infrastructure as Code (IaC) leader. Multi-cloud provisioning, state management. Essential for modern DevOps pipelines.



## **AWS Certified DevOps Engineer – Professional**

CI/CD, automation, observability on AWS. One of the most sought-after professional DevOps credentials.



## **Entry-Level & Foundational**



### **CompTIA A+**

Universally recognized starting point. Hardware, troubleshooting, OS, networking basics. 91% report career progression after certification.



### **Microsoft Fundamentals (AZ-900, AI-900, SC-900)**

No prerequisites, no expiration. Perfect for cloud, security, and AI awareness early on.

 Zero cost options

### **CompTIA Network+**

Vendor-neutral networking — great for junior network engineers and data center support roles.



## Project Management & Governance



### PMP (Project Management Professional)

Highest-paying non-technical cert (\$120k–\$140k). Over 10,000+ job postings require PMP. Essential for leading AI/digital transformation.



### ITIL 4 Foundation

Align IT services with business objectives. Increasingly valuable as AI transforms service operations.



### CISA (ISACA)

Information Systems Auditor — audit, assurance, control. 4.1k+ job postings demand CISA.








## How to Choose the Right Certification

If you want to...	Start with...
Enter IT	CompTIA A+
Move into Cloud	AWS Solutions Architect Associate
Start Cybersecurity	CompTIA Security+


If you want to...	Start with...
Get into Networking	<b>Cisco CCNA</b>
Go Deep in DevOps	<b>CKA (Kubernetes) + Terraform Associate</b>
Lead Security Programs	<b>CISSP or CISM</b> (after experience)
Manage IT Projects	<b>PMP</b>
Stay relevant with AI	<b>AWS AI Practitioner</b>

## Key Trends for 2026

-  **AI is no longer optional** — Certs combining cloud + AI/ML skills (AWS AI Practitioner, Gen AI Developer) rapidly gain value.
-  **Cloud remains dominant** — AWS, Azure, GCP certs consistently lead to six-figure salaries.
-  **Security is mandatory** — CISSP, CISM, and CEH in high demand as cyber threats escalate.
-  **Hands-on exams win** — CKA's practical format increasingly respected over multiple-choice.
-  **Multi-cloud skills pay off** — certs in AWS + Azure or AWS + GCP differentiate you.

## Official & Free Learning Resources

-  [AWS Training](#)
-  [Microsoft Learn](#)
-  [Google Cloud Skills](#)
-  [CompTIA](#)
-  [Cisco Networking Academy](#)
-  [PMI \(PMP\)](#)

 Data based on 2025–2026 reports from QA, ONLC, Robert Half, Digital Cloud Training, ISACA. Always verify prerequisites.

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