# Best certifications for software engineers in 2026

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Short answer: most software engineers are hired on code, projects and interviews, so a certification is a supplement, not a requirement. The ones that help most are a cloud developer or architect certification for the platform you work on, Kubernetes certifications such as CKAD if you deploy to Kubernetes, and, as you move towards senior and lead roles, a vendor-neutral credential that tests design and delivery judgement, such as IICTP's CTP.

**TL;DR The short version**

- Most software engineers are hired on code, projects and interviews, so a certification supplements rather than replaces them.
- Useful options are a cloud developer or architect certification for your platform and CKAD if you deploy to Kubernetes; IICTP's ATP needs no experience.
- At senior level the work shifts to decisions, where a judgement credential such as IICTP's CTP fits; readable code and explained decisions still help more.

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## Early career

- A cloud developer or associate certification for your employer's cloud.
- IICTP ATP: no experience required, 100 questions in 120 minutes, testing software lifecycle, version control, testing and delivery fundamentals.
- Language and framework certificates are rarely asked for; a public project usually says more.

## Mid-level

- CKAD if you build for Kubernetes. See Kubernetes certifications.
- A security or testing credential if you specialise: see cybersecurity certifications.
- An AI credential if you build AI features: see AI certifications.

## Senior and lead

At senior level the work shifts to decisions: architecture trade-offs, delivery, security and leading others. IICTP's CTP tests those in 150 scenario questions over 180 minutes and needs 36 months of technical leadership with a bachelor's degree. See the best certifications for tech leads.

## What helps more than a certificate

- Code others can read: a public repository or a write-up of something you built.
- Being able to explain a past design decision and what you would change.
- Interview practice. See system design interviews.

## Related answers

- Best IT certifications by role
- Are IT certifications worth it?
- Vendor-neutral certifications for software engineers

## Before you book

Certification bodies rename, update and retire exams often. Check each issuer's own page for current versions, prerequisites and fees before you book.

> Related credential: Certified Technical Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

### Sources and further reading


1. AWS. AWS Certification. aws.amazon.com/certification.
2. Microsoft. Microsoft Credentials. learn.microsoft.com/credentials.
3. Google Cloud. Google Cloud certification. cloud.google.com/learn/certification.
4. Linux Foundation. Training and certification. training.linuxfoundation.org.
5. IICTP. Exam facts, eligibility and blueprints. iictp.org/certifications/exam-facts.



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