

Which cert next

A practical order for someone already in, or moving into, cybersecurity.

If you only keep one line

Networking first. Then Security+, the baseline hiring managers want. After that, take the cert the job post actually names. One cert at a time, with a lab beside it.

START HERE, IN THIS ORDER

1. Basic networking

Everyone needs it. If you cannot explain a subnet, a route, and what a firewall rule is doing, fix that before you stack security exams. Network+ or real network work both count. Skip the exam only if you already do this daily.

2. Security+

This is the baseline hiring managers want. It is the credential that shows up in job posts and in DoD-style requirements. Get it before a specialty cert unless you already have equivalent experience.

3. ISC2 CC, only as an optional first step

Certified in Cybersecurity is lesser known. It can be a low-friction start from the same organization as CISSP. It does not replace Security+ on most hiring screens.

THEN MATCH THE JOB

SOC and posted requirements: CEH

CEH is required by many jobs, including SOC roles. If the postings you want list it, take it. It does not replace hands-on detection and response work.

Stay technical: SecurityX

SecurityX is the more technical senior cert. That is the current name. Do not plan around CASP+. Use SecurityX when you want to stay hands-on as a senior engineer or architect.

Lead a program: CISSP, not CISM first

CISSP covers technical work plus managerial work, and it is more respected. CISM is easier than CISSP. Take CISM when the role is governance and you want that exam, knowing CISSP is the one people treat as the senior credential.

Cloud: CCSP after CISSP

Take CCSP after CISSP, not instead of it. A vendor security cert for the cloud you actually run still matters alongside it.

IT audit: PMP beside CISA

PMP adds value on a CISA or IT audit path. It is a project credential, not a security cert. It helps when the job is controls, evidence, and running the work.

THE ORDER THAT HOLDS UP

Networking, then Security+, then the lane the job names. CEH when postings require it, including many SOC roles. SecurityX if you stay technical. CISSP when you are ready to own a program. CCSP after CISSP for cloud. CISM is the easier management exam; CISSP is more respected. PMP if the path is CISA or IT audit. ISC2 CC stays optional and lesser known.

SKIP THESE MOVES

- Starting with CISSP and calling yourself senior. You can sit the exam early. You do not hold the full credential until the experience requirement is met, and hiring managers know that.
- Collecting more entry-level certs after Security+. CC plus a pile of fundamentals says the same thing twice.
- Studying a retired exam version, or using the old CASP+ name when you mean SecurityX.