



## Cyber Essentials Vs Cyber Essentials Plus



### What are the certification standards?

Cyber 'Essentials' are exactly that. They are the essential actions every business should take for comprehensive digital security and protection from cyber threats.

The certifications verify that you are compliant with those guidelines.

Today, Cyber Essentials certification is required for government contracts and, increasingly, when tendering in other fields. But more than that, certification is an investment in the future and security of your business.

Earning certification demonstrates an essential commitment to cyber safety to both business partners and customers. So, what is the Cyber Essentials? What are the differences between Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus?

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## Cyber Essentials

The Cyber Essentials certification process is considered the first step towards being cyber secure in the UK. It outlines the security controls organisations must have to protect their data.

### The scheme assesses five technical controls:

- Boundary firewalls and internet gateways - that you have a secure internet connection
- Secure configuration - that you have the most secure settings turned on, on all your company devices
- User access control - that you have full control over who is accessing your data and services
- Malware protection - that you have protection in place against viruses and malware
- Patch management - that your devices and software are updated with the latest versions

Once you understand these basic controls and have them in place, you must fill out a questionnaire confirming your devices meet these criteria. This is a self-assessment which you then sign and submit for review by a certification body.



## Cyber Essentials Plus

Cyber Essentials Plus has the very same requirements as Cyber Essentials (you must have all five security controls in place) but differs in one crucial aspect. While Cyber Essentials is self-assessed and relies on your word that your company is compliant, Cyber Essentials Plus also includes an independent assessment carried out by a licensed auditor.

After completing the self-assessment portion, an auditor will typically come to your location or, with CyberSmart, remotely access your network. They will manually check for issues and make sure your assessment was correct. This could include testing anti-malware software by sending emails, checking for outdated software on a device, or testing how files are accessed by different users.

If the certification body deems your technical controls are acceptable, you will be certified and earn a place on the government's directory of Cyber Essentials Plus compliant organisations.

The certification signifies that your company has implemented all the cybersecurity measures necessary to protect customer data.

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## The main advantage of Cyber Essentials Plus

At this point, you might be wondering: is there a real benefit to the extra effort of earning Cyber Essentials Plus?

The primary advantage of Cyber Essentials Plus is that it offers absolute assurance that correct controls are in place through use of an impartial third party. Customers and partners do not have to just take your word that you are cyber secure - they can rely on the expertise of a professional. It demonstrates to both your customers and partners that you are committed to cyber security and protects your company.

Beyond the positive image that comes with certification, compliance ultimately means safety. For your business, for your employees, and for your customers.

Taking the time to prepare your company for compliance by implementing firewall protection, secure configurations, user access control, malware protection, and patch management is the first step to become a secure organisation.

## Which certification is right for me?

Which certification is better for you depends on what your goals are. If you're looking to show customers that you care about data protection, then the Essentials certification can be a solid starting point. It is also advisable and, in some cases a requirement, that companies bidding for contracts or tenders in the public sector achieve the necessary certification.

If you hold any form of sensitive data, you should consider getting the Plus certification. However, for many smaller organisations, the cost of paying an independent auditor can be steep as costs for travel and expenses can quickly add up. If cybersecurity

compliance is integral to your sector, as many sectors more often are, the standard Cyber Essentials certification is a great first step.

If you are unsure, start with the Cyber Essentials and you can always add the Plus version further down the line. However, be aware that to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus, you must have achieved Cyber Essentials within the last 3 months.

## Show you're serious about security today

The Cyber Essentials Scheme (and the Plus certification in particular) is an excellent way to show your customers that you take their security seriously. CyberSmart is a leading IASME-approved Certification Body and can help support you every step of the way in securing the Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus certifications.

CyberSmart's cyber-readiness process can help you to achieve both standards of certification faster than anyone else in the market, with a 100% success rate, often on the same day.

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