
Security Clearance Information

A security clearance is a special status given to those who have met stringent requirements, allowing access to classified information. Given the sensitive nature of the information security clearances afford, they can be difficult to obtain.

Security clearances are issued by numerous U.S. government agencies including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy (DoE), Department of Justice, and Central Intelligence Agency. Almost 80% of clearances are issued by the DoD. Depending on the clearance level it can take a few weeks to 18 months to obtain one.

Most U.S. Government jobs require one of three levels of clearance. The three basic levels of clearance are: Confidential, Secret, and Top Secret. Some government organizations and contractors may require additional clearances, based on the position. For example, government agencies and contractors that work with one or more of the 26 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries may require one of the following clearances:

- **Cosmic Top Secret (CTS)** – This is essentially the same as U.S. Top Secret but for NATO nations.
- **NATO Secret (NS)** – This is the same as U.S. Secret, information that would cause serious damage to NATO.
- **NATO Confidential (NC)** – Allows for access to information that could be damaging to the interests of NATO.
- **NATO Restricted (NR)** – Provides access to information that is not classified, but if disclosed, would be disadvantageous to the interests of NATO.
- **ATOMAL** – Allows access to information to U.S. Restricted/Formerly Restricted Data or U.K. Atomic information that has been officially released to NATO, and can be classified at all three levels (CTS, NS, and NC).

(Source: <https://news.clearancejobs.com/2015/02/06/security-clearance-levels-access/>)

You cannot apply for a clearance on your own. Hiring officials determine whether a position will require a security clearance based upon the duties and responsibilities of the position. If the position requires access to classified information, a personnel

security background investigation must be conducted. This is only done after a conditional offer of employment is given.

Here are some additional resources:

Cleared.net: <https://clearedjobs.net/security-clearance-faqs>

GoGovernment: <https://gogovernment.org/background-checks-and-security-clearances-for-federal-jobs/>

ClearanceJobs: <https://news.clearancejobs.com/2015/02/06/security-clearance-levels-access/>

U.S. Department of State: <https://www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances/c10977.htm#3>

U.S. Intelligence Careers: <https://www.intelligencecareers.gov/icapply.html>