



Certificate vs Certification

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A certificate shows that one has earned credits or obtained specialized education in a structured environment. A certificate shows you have put forth effort to stay up-to-date in your field or expand your business offerings. A certificate program is not professional certification. But, earning certificates can help you gain the knowledge that will help you become a Certified Professional.

You may have seen some training institutions state, "Take our program and become a Certified ABC School Professional Organizer." This means ABC School can confirm (certify) you have met *their* program requirements. However, ABC School decides what the qualifications are and can change those qualifications at any time. They are under no obligation to meet any industry-wide standard.

For Professional Certification, a regulatory body (government or not-for-profit agency) is formed *independent of any training program*. They establish specific industry-wide standards. They use an accredited testing company to assess the knowledge of participants. They ensure the examinations and/or interviews are valid, reliable, accurate, dependable, and legally defensible. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the regulatory body and its examination material and techniques comply with accreditation guidelines.

Here is a brief overview of the difference between Certificates and Certifications.

Certificate	Certification
Earned on completion of education course or series of courses.	Earned after in-depth assessment of knowledge and experience.
For both new and experienced professionals.	Requires a specific amount of "hands-on" experience – possibly as an apprentice.
Demonstrates knowledge of course content.	Indicates competency measured against an industry standard – usually by exam.
Course content set through academic process.	Standards set through an industry-wide process.

Often listed on a résumé in courses or education section.	Results in a designation to use after one's name (CPO®, CRM®, PMP®).
No requirement for continual training.	Has ongoing training requirements to maintain designation (continuing education credits).

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