

Cloud Engineer

Build and run the servers, networks and storage that other people's apps live on, without ever touching a physical machine.

TYPICAL PAY

\$134,050

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$80k to \$203k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Tech companies, banks, hospitals, government contractors, fully re...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Any computer class, plus math. Build something at home: a home server, a website, a game server for your friends.
- 2 Learn the foundations** 1 to 4 years
 Networking, Linux and one scripting language. A two-year associate degree, a bachelor's degree, or a stack of certifications all get you here.
- 3 Get any job that touches real systems** 1 to 2 years
 Help desk, desktop support, junior system administrator. This is the step people try to skip and cannot.
- 4 Certify on one cloud** 3 to 9 months
 Pick Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure or Google Cloud and go deep on one. The foundational exam, then an associate-level one.
- 5 Move into a cloud role** Ongoing
 Usually inside the company you already work for, because they know you. Then keep specializing.

Pros and cons

- + High pay without a licensed profession's years of training
- + Remote work is normal, not a special arrangement
- + Certifications are cheap and fast compared with a degree
- On-call rotations mean your phone can wake you up
- The tools change constantly and your knowledge goes stale
- Junior roles are scarce, so the first job is the hard one

Good to know

The job title is younger than you are

Amazon Web Services launched its first public services in 2006. Cloud engineering as a job title barely existed before then, which is why so many senior people in it started somewhere else.

There is no federal job code for it

The government wage survey has no category called cloud engineer. People doing this work are counted as network architects, systems administrators or software developers, which is why salary sites disa...

Optional boosts

Solutions Architect, associate level. A professional-level cloud certification. Security certifications. Kubernetes and container credentials.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Computer Network Architects (15-1241.00)

AWS Certification

CompTIA certifications

Western Governors University: Cloud and Network Engineering degree

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/cloud-engineer>



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