Frequently Asked Questions

The ATD Certification Institute

The ATD Certification Institute (ATD CI) is an independent organization created by the Association for Talent Development to set industry standards for the talent development profession. ATD CI awards two credentials: the Associate Professional in Talent Development (APTD®) and the Certified Professional in Talent Development (CPTD®) (formerly known as the Certified Professional in Learning & Performance [CPLP]).

The ATD Certification Institute is responsible for the development, administration, and governance of ATD's credentialing program, including the APTD and CPTD credentials. In accordance with international accreditation standards for certification programs, ATD CI operates at an arm's length from ATD's education and training programs to ensure separation of the assessment process from test prep.

The Talent Development Capability Model™

The Talent Development Capability Model defines the capabilities for the talent development field. It answers the question, "What do talent development professionals need to know and do to be successful?" The model is the foundation for the APTD and the CPTD certifications. The exam blueprints for each credential use a subset of the knowledge and skills statements deemed appropriate for talent development professionals at different points in their careers. For more detailed information about the model, go to td.org/capability-model.



Q: Who are the certifications designed for?

A: **Associate Professional in Talent Development:** The APTD is a professional certification for talent development professionals who are early in their careers or whose professional roles and aspirations are focused on foundational areas of the field. An APTD credential holder understands that well-designed talent development strategies and solutions contribute to organizational success and has a strong grounding in the foundational knowledge of the field. The APTD is designed for professionals with at least three years of work experience in the talent development field.

Certified Professional in Talent Development: The CPTD is a professional certification for talent development practitioners with deep knowledge and experience applying the principles for enhancing employee workplace learning and performance. A CPTD credential holder understands the value and impact talent development strategies and solutions bring to the success of an organization. The CPTD is designed for talent development professionals with at least five years of relevant work experience.

Eligibility Requirements

Q: What are the eligibility requirements?

A: To be eligible to apply for either credential, candidates must fulfill the work experience and professional development requirements outlined further in this document.

Q: What is the process for achieving the APTD or CPTD?

A: To sit for the respective exams, APTD candidates must have:

- At least three years of experience
- 28 hours of qualifying professional development

CPTD candidates must have:

- At least five years of experience
- 60 hours of qualifying professional development

If eligible, candidates must pass the certification exam within 18 months of applying.

Q: What type of work experience is required?

A: Candidates for the APTD and CPTD must have paid, professional work experience working with adults, and performing talent development activities as described in the Developing Professional Capability or Impacting Organizational Capability domains of the Talent Development Capability Model.

To qualify for the respective exams:

- APTD candidates must have a minimum of three years (36 months) of work experience in the talent development field.
- CPTD candidates must have a minimum of five years (60 months) of work experience in the talent development field.

Candidates for either certification must have reached the required months of experience at the time of application.

The one exception to the work experience requirement is candidates with a current APTD credential who apply for the CPTD credential. Candidates already holding an APTD credential are required to have at least four years (48 months) of experience in the talent development field to sit for the exam.

Q: Can you explain the professional development requirement?

A: ATD CI wants to be certain that all applicants have a solid foundation of knowledge in talent development on which to be assessed. The professional development requirement strengthens a candidate's likelihood of success and provides a stronger foundation for the program's credibility externally.

For the APTD and CPTD, candidates must:

- Document a certain amount of continuing education in talent development before applying for the exams.
- For the APTD, candidates must document 28 hours of professional development during the most recent three years.
- For the CPTD, candidates must document 60 hours of professional development during the most recent five years.

Q: What professional development activities can be used for eligibility purposes?

A: The professional development requirement is designed to ensure that applicants for certification have a solid foundation of talent development knowledge on which to be assessed. The content of this continuing education must come from topics found in the Developing Professional Capability or Impacting Organizational Capability domains of the Talent Development Capability Model (see table on the following page for acceptable topics). Content in the Building Personal Capability domain will not be accepted for initial eligibility but will be appropriate for recertification. ATD courses designed to prepare you for the APTD or CPTD exams can be reported for 20 hours of professional development.

Professional Capabilities	Organizational Capabilities
Learning Sciences	Business Insight
Instructional Design	Consulting and Business Partnering
Training Delivery and Facilitation	Organization Development and Culture
Technology Application	Talent Strategy and Management
Knowledge Management	Performance Improvement
Career and Leadership Development *(Developing others, not yourself)*	Change Management
Coaching	Data and Analytics
Evaluating Impact	Future Readiness

Examples of eligible professional development activities include:

- Attending commercially available talent development educational courses or talent development workshops
- Attending educational sessions related to the talent development industry at local conferences such as ones sponsored by ATD or SHRM chapters
- Attending talent development chapter events or other talent development industry meetings
  - Business meetings, committee meetings, and general information meetings are ineligible.
- Attending undergraduate or graduate-level talent development courses from an accredited institution
  - These courses are eligible for 15 hours per semester credit hour.

For all professional development activities, applicants should retain proof of completion in the event they are selected for audit.

Q: Are there any exceptions to the professional development requirement?

A: There are two special circumstances related to professional development: candidates holding a current APTD credential and candidates who have recently completed an ATD Master series program.

- **APTD:** Candidates for the CPTD who hold a current APTD credential may use their APTD to satisfy the full professional development requirement. These candidates should choose the **CPTD with APTD Pathway** when applying for the CPTD.
- **ATD Master Program Designation:** Candidates for the APTD or the CPTD who have completed an ATD Master Program (ATD Master Trainer®, Master Instructional Designer®, or ATD Master Performance Consultant™) may use their ATD Master Program designation to satisfy the full professional development requirement for either credential. The master program must have been completed in the most recent five years for CPTD candidates and the most recent three years for APTD candidates. Candidates with an ATD Master Program designation should select the **CPTD (or APTD) with ATD Master Program Pathway** when applying.

Q: How are the hours for professional development calculated?

A: Professional development hours are calculated as such:

- One hour is awarded for each physical hour of a continuing education activity unless otherwise specified.
- Hours are accrued on an hourly basis for all educational time in talent development–related continuing education events, including online training. Prorated hours (in 15-minute increments) are permissible after the first 30 minutes.
- All educational activities must be at least 30 minutes in length to qualify.
- For all professional development activities, applicants must be able to obtain proof of completion.
- To convert CEUs to professional development hours multiply the CEUs by 10 (as such, 1.4 CEUs equal 14 hours).

Q: Is teaching at the K-12 level considered qualifying experience?

A: Teaching children in a K-12 environment is not considered qualifying work experience because it does not involve teaching adults in a work setting. Teaching in higher education is considered qualifying work experience. Candidates who have been training teachers or performing instructional design activities in a K-12 school setting would have qualifying experience.

Q: Does a college degree count toward professional development or experience?

A: A degree in any subject does not count toward work experience. However, college courses taken toward a degree may count toward professional development if they are in subjects that align with the Talent Development Capability Model. In addition, to qualify, you must take the courses in the most recent three years for APTD candidates and the most recent five years for CPTD candidates. For professional development purposes, relevant college courses are worth 15 hours per college credit. A typical three-credit college course is worth 45 professional development hours.

Q: How do I know if ATD CI has accepted my application?

A: Once you decide to apply for the APTD or CPTD, you must submit your application through the certification portal and provide your work experience and information about your qualifying professional development hours. You will also need to upload a current resume. You will not be able to submit your application and pay if it does not satisfy the eligibility requirements as previously outlined. Once your application is submitted, you will immediately receive a confirmation and an authorization to test, unless you are selected for audit. For step-by-step instructions about how to apply, download this job aid.

Q: What proof must I submit for professional development on the application?

A: Candidates should retain proof of completion in the event they are randomly selected for audit. Candidates who are selected for audit will be notified immediately after their application is submitted. Candidates do not need to provide proof of completion unless they are selected for audit. Proof of completion is typically a certificate of attendance or completion. For events such as the ATD International Conference & EXPO, proof of registration and other documentation, such as a photocopy of the conference badge, is acceptable. ATD CI staff will work with audited candidates to determine acceptable proof for submitted professional development activities.

Exam Content and Process

Q: What is covered on the exams?

A: The exams align to the Talent Development Capability Model that answers the question, "What do talent development professionals need to know and do to be successful?" The model is the foundation for the APTD and CPTD certifications. The exams for each credential use a subset of the knowledge and skills statements deemed appropriate for talent development professionals at different points in their career.

The APTD exam includes knowledge and skills that TD professionals should possess at the three-year mark of their career. Twenty percent of the questions on the APTD exam cover topics in the Building Personal Capability domain, 50 percent are from the Developing Professional Capability domain, and 30 percent are from the Impacting Organizational Capability domain. For more detail about the content included on the APTD exam, click here.

For the CPTD, the exam covers the skills and knowledge that professionals should possess at the five-year mark in their careers. Twenty percent of the questions on the CPTD exam cover topics in the Building Personal Capability domain, 45 percent are from the Developing Professional Capability domain, and 35 percent are from the Impacting Organizational Capability domain. For more details about the content on the CPTD exam, click here.

Q: How will I know if I passed the exam?

A: APTD and CPTD candidates receive score results on the day of the exam. Unsuccessful candidates will receive a score report that contains feedback at the domain level to provide assistance should they choose to retake the exam.

Q: What is considered a passing score?

A: Candidates must achieve a score of 500 or higher to pass the exam. A candidate score is represented on a scale of 200-800 with 500 being the required passing score. A consistent passing standard is applied to all candidates equally. ATD CI does not score on a curve, so a candidate's score does not depend on others who test during the same window. Details about exam scoring can be found in the Exam Results section of the APTD Certification Handbook or CPTD Certification Handbook.

Q: How long is the exam?

A: The APTD exam has 115 questions that must be completed in two hours. The CPTD exam includes 90 multiple choice questions and 10 case management type questions, and candidates have three hours to complete the exam. For the CPTD exam, candidates have 105 minutes to complete the multiple choice portion and 65 minutes to complete the case management questions. There is an optional 10-minute break between the two sections of the CPTD exam.

Q: Where can I take the exam?

A: The computer-based exams may be taken at conveniently located testing centers worldwide **or** in a secure location of your choosing via remote proctoring. Candidates should have reliable internet access and a private, quiet space to take the exam if they choose the remote proctoring option.

Q: When can I take the exam?

A: The APTD exam is offered every other month throughout the year in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The CPTD exam is offered every other month throughout the year in February, April, June, August, October, and December. The registration deadline for each testing window is approximately 30 days before the window begins.

Q: What is a black-out period?

A: Testing windows span a three-month period with a one-month black-out period when the exam is not offered. This structure allows you to choose a window that provides two different months to take the exam with a one-month break in between. There is no penalty for transferring within your testing window from the earlier month to the later month or vice versa, but transferring to a different three-month period will incur a fee.

Preparing for the Exams

Q: How should I study for the exam?

A: Candidates should design their preparation plan to address their own knowledge and skill gaps. An online self-assessment tool can be accessed here. By selecting the "APTD or CPTD Ready-Learning Path" for the assessment, candidates will receive a gap analysis and recommended resources relevant to the APTD or CPTD exam content.

Because the APTD and CPTD exams cover common talent development topics, there are several ways for candidates to prepare. ATD CI has provided a Reading Reference List of texts that were used to develop the exam questions. The *TDBoK™ Guide: Talent Development Body of Knowledge, Second Edition* provides a good explanation of the "what" and the "why" for the knowledge and skill statements contained in the Talent Development Capability Model. However, the *TDBoK Guide* includes limited information about how the knowledge should be applied in the workplace, so candidates should not rely on the *TDBoK Guide* as their only source for study.

ATD Education offers preparation courses that reflect the content of the current APTD and CPTD exams. To learn more about ATD prep courses, which are not required for certification, see these pages: Prepare for the APTD and Prepare for the CPTD.

Q: How many hours should I plan to study for the exam?

A: Each candidate should tailor their study plan to their own strengths and weaknesses as well as how much experience they have had. For the current APTD exam, candidates reported spending an average of 60 to 80 hours preparing. For the new CPTD exam, candidates have reported spending an average of 80 to 120 hours to prepare, depending upon their knowledge level on the topics that are tested.

Q: Are there practice tests or sample questions for the exams?

A: A limited number of sample questions can be found in the certification handbooks. The APTD and CPTD preparation courses contain a full-length practice test, however, an APTD or CPTD practice test can be purchased separately.

Q: Do you have a sample study plan?

A: The APTD Study Guide and the CPTD Study Guide contain a sample study plan as well as study tips and resources.

Q: Do I need to join a study group to pass the exam?

A: Many candidates find it helpful to join a study group or find an accountability partner. However, many candidates pass the exam studying on their own. Your decision to join a study group should be guided by your personal preference and time constraints. If you are interested in finding a study group, a list of local ATD chapters that are supporting virtual study groups can be found here.

Cost of Certification

Q: How much do the exams cost?

A: The exam fees vary for ATD members and nonmembers. Visit certification/APTD/exam or certification/CPTD/exam. The exam fee covers a testing seat for the exam, a score report, and a certificate and lapel pin after the exam has been passed. Prep courses are optional and not included in the exam fee, and repeat attempts at the exam are optional.

Q: Are there any scholarships or discounts available to cover the cost of certification?

A: At the present time, ATD National does not have a scholarship program to cover certification costs. Some local ATD chapters do have scholarship programs. To inquire about the availability of scholarships, contact the certification director of your local ATD chapter. To find your local ATD chapter, see this page.

ATD occasionally provides discounts on the exam fee or provides a free retest. ATD CI typically posts notices about about any specials on the certification web pages and in the CPTD and APTD LinkedIn Preparation groups that can be found here (for CPTD) and here (for APTD).

The APTD and CPTD exams are approved for benefits under the GI Bill. ATD CI participates in the Department of Defense Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) programs that offer reimbursement by Service Branch for US military applicants.