

Credentialed & Non-Credentialed Scanning:

Nessus supports two types of vulnerability scanning methods: Credentialed and Non-Credentialed. The choice between them affects the depth and accuracy of the scan results. Credentialed scans are more in-depth and accurate, while non-credentialed scans are useful for simulating what an outsider can see. For best results, use both types as part of a layered security assessment strategy.



Credentialed Scan

Provides in-depth and accurate results



Non-Credentialed Scan

Simulates an outsider's view

Credentialed Scans:

Also known as **Authenticated Scanning**. Nessus logs in to the target system to perform a deeper and more accurate analysis. Uses privileged credentials to log into target systems and perform in-depth, authenticated checks. Provides comprehensive, accurate results by accessing system internals, installed software, patch levels, and configurations.

Identifies both client-side and server-side vulnerabilities, misconfigurations, missing patches, and compliance issues. Higher accuracy, fewer false positives, and more actionable findings.

Non-Credentialed Scans:

Also known as **Unauthenticated Scanning**. Nessus scans the target from the outside, just like an external attacker would. Scans systems externally without authentication, relying on publicly accessible information. Limited to enumerating exposed ports, services, and vulnerabilities visible from the network.

More false positives and negatives due to lack of internal access. External attack surface assessment, quick checks, and identifying what an attacker could see. No credentials needed; easier to deploy but less comprehensive.

Result in false positives and unreliable information about operating systems and installed software. This method is generally used by cyber attackers and security analysts to try and determine the security posture of externally facing assets and to find possible data leaks.

Feature	Non-Credentialed Scan	Credentialed Scan
Access Method	External only	Logs into system
Accuracy	Lower	Higher
Performance	Faster	Slightly Slower
Patch Detection	Limited	Full detection
Configuration Checks	No	Yes
Privileges Required	None	Admin/root access needed

Credentialed and Non-Credentialed Scans

