

HOW TO BREAK INTO AN ENTRY-LEVEL IT JOB WITH NO EXPERIENCE **AND** 5 PROVEN WAYS TO GET CYBERSECURITY EXPERIENCE

Presenter:

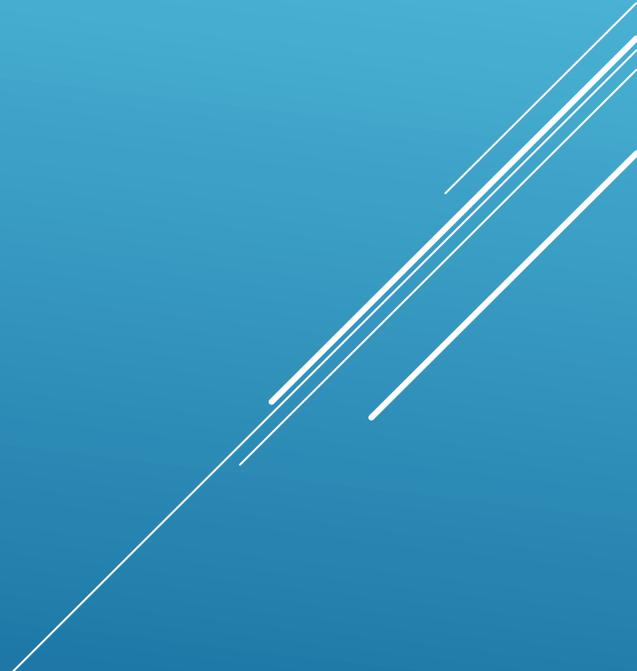
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Reference Articles:

- [How to Break into an Entry-Level IT Job with No Experience](#)
 - Source: [CompTIA Tech Career Academy](#)
- [5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience](#)
 - Source: [Start a Cyber Career](#)

***** Presented October 5, 2022 *****

MAIN POINTS

- ▶ Do Your Homework
 - ▶ Build Your Skills
 - ▶ Get a Certification
 - ▶ Prepare for a Job Search
 - ▶ Find an Entry-Level IT Job
 - ▶ 5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience
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PART 1:

- ▶ **If you want to start a new career in IT, it can feel like you face a catch-22:**
 - ▶ You need experience to get a job, but you need a job to get experience.
 - ▶ Job postings, even for “entry-level” positions, will often list several years’ experience among their requirements. **Unless you have never been in the workforce, I would not consider you entry level.**
- ▶ **Getting started in IT without experience begins with doing some **research**.** You should **familiarize yourself with three broad areas:**
 - ▶ **The IT Industry**: Get to know the kinds of businesses and activities included in IT. Part of your goal here is to orient yourself and be able to talk intelligently about the industry you are hoping to enter. Another goal should be to start to identify the particular areas within IT that you think would be a good fit for your skills and interests. **Note: It’s important to enjoy the work you’re doing & can be successful at, too!**
 - ▶ **Terminology**: Every industry has its own lingo. You should make note of unfamiliar terms and acronyms and make sure you know what they mean — including ‘IT.’ This is foundational knowledge that everything else you learn will rely upon. It also gives you credibility when it comes time to talk with potential employers.
 - ▶ **Career paths**: You should have at least a general sense of what career paths in the IT sector look like so you can be strategic about your next steps.
- ▶ One great resource to explore is “LinkedIn” accounts/careers from others who have gone before you. Not only can these be a rich source of advice; they can even give you a bit of inspiration.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- ▶ Okay, you've **gotten yourself oriented to the industry** and have some **ideas about areas in IT you'd like to pursue**.
- ▶ The **next task is to consider the skills you need in order to be qualified for entry-level positions in IT**. Keep in mind that **job skills for IT come in two varieties: technical skills and general skills**.
- ▶ **Technical skills** are those **areas of knowledge specific to the IT world**. There are certain **foundational areas** of which **you'll need at least a basic understanding**. These include:
 - ▶ **Operating Systems** (like Microsoft Windows, Linux, and macOS)
 - ▶ **Networking** (including hardware, setup, and troubleshooting)
 - ▶ **Data/Cyber Security** (knowledge of best practices for safeguarding customer & company data)
 - ▶ **Programming Languages** (knowing about different types of programming languages like Python helps you understand how computer programs are created & which languages work best).
- ▶ **General Skills** are **important for jobs in many different industries** and **don't depend upon specialized training or knowledge**. These include the **ability to explain technical concepts in easy-to-understand terms (critical)** and the following important skills:

Communication (verbal & written)	Problem Solving	Leadership
Organization	Time Management	Project Management
Customer Service	Understanding of Risk	Maturity & Work Ethic

BUILD YOUR SKILLS ...

- ▶ One thing you may notice as you look at these lists is that **you already possess one or more of the general skills listed.**
 - ▶ You may not have networking experience, but you may have worked in a position before where you had to work directly with customers to help solve their problems.
 - ▶ When it comes to being qualified for an entry-level position in IT, **experience in these general skills is a solid asset!**
 - ▶ It's important to highlight the general & technical skills on your resume & cover letter to match job description requirements. Note: **Custom resumes & cover letters** that matched job requirements **broke me out from 100's of applicants** → **"I'd already done what they needed"**.
- ▶ As for the technical skills, you will want to dive into learning everything you can in these areas to prepare yourself to apply for entry-level positions.
 - ▶ There are plenty of online resources that can help you do so.
 - ▶ **[The Definitive Guide for Getting into Cybersecurity](#)** from [Start a Cyber Career](#)
 - ▶ **[Is Cyber Security Hard?](#)** from [Start a Cyber Career](#)

... BUILD YOUR SKILLS

- ▶ Even **better than** just learning about things like networking and data security is being able to **prove to a potential employer that you have the knowledge and skills needed for an entry-level position.** This is why **getting a related certification is a smart move!**
- ▶ **Certifications are awarded after you pass an exam covering a certain domain of knowledge and abilities.** For example, similar to a college degree or **trade school courses**, but in a much more focused form.
- ▶ **Certifications also demonstrate** things like a **desire to learn, ability to learn, tenacity, willingness to work to pass an exam that everyone doesn't pass (or even attempt).**
- ▶ There are a **number of certifications available in IT that will greatly enhance your credibility with a potential employer**, signaling that you have the skills they need to fill their position.
- ▶ **One of the most widely recognized is the CompTIA A+.** This certification covers the foundational areas for the IT industry, including those mentioned above (operating systems, networking, and data security). It also covers customer support (making sure you know how to troubleshoot and resolve technical problems) and IT operations (the knowledge needed to support a business's IT infrastructure). No matter which career path you choose in IT, **this certification is a strategic investment** - and **preparation for the CompTIA A+ exam can help.**

GET A CERTIFICATION

- ▶ As you are working on acquiring the skills and certifications you need to be competitive for entry-level jobs, you should **also get ready to apply for positions**. Here are key places to invest time in:
- ▶ **Your Resume**
 - ▶ **Start by working on your resume**. For one thing, you will **need one to send to potential employers**. Beyond that practical necessity, however, the **process of creating your resume will be a helpful exercise in thinking through the value you represent to your future boss**.
 - ▶ Remember the general skills mentioned above? **Give careful thought to how your past experiences might be relevant to an entry-level position in IT**. This is **your opportunity to show that you do have experience that makes you an attractive candidate**.
 - ▶ For instance, maybe you **worked in marketing and have a knack for communication**. This is an **asset for many entry-level IT jobs that involve customer interaction (i.e., all)**. Maybe you studied philosophy in college; talk about how you love problem solving. **With a little creativity, you can find relevant experience that sets you apart, whatever your background**.

PREPARE FOR A JOB SEARCH ...

▶ LinkedIn

- ▶ LinkedIn is a **powerful networking tool and a primary place to find jobs and connect with potential employers**. 49,000,000 people use it to look for jobs, and 6 are hired on the site every minute.
- ▶ Take the time to **set up a professional-looking profile that showcases your qualifications**. You can use the material you already developed for your resume.

▶ Your Network

- ▶ **One of your greatest assets may be your connections**. According to research, up to **80% of hires come through professional and personal connections**, and **many positions are never posted publicly per Recruiters**.
 - ▶ Now that you have your **professional profile** up on LinkedIn, **take advantage of the site's tools for reaching out to people you know and let them know you are starting a career in IT**. You never know who might know someone (or be someone!) looking to fill an entry-level position.
 - ▶ **Be proud of your accomplishments! Networking is **probably the best way to "give yourself credit"** for all the **things you've accomplished while preparing for this "new career."****
- ▶ **TIP: Struggling to build a professional brand, regardless of your experience and qualifications? This #GetHired Live with Diana YK Chan is a **must-watch!****

... PREPARE FOR A JOB SEARCH

- ▶ Once you have gotten oriented to the world of IT, acquired some necessary skills along with a certification, and prepared yourself for the job market, it's **time to begin to find and apply for positions**. You can search for open positions on job sites like **Indeed** and **Monster** or sites specific to the tech industry like **Dice**. **LinkedIn, again, is also a great source.**
- ▶ By this point in the process, **you should have some ideas about the kinds of positions you're looking for, but what if you're feeling unsure?**
- ▶ One **common entry point for the IT industry is in IT operations**. You'll see titles here like **Computer Support Specialist** or **Help Desk Technician**. These kinds of roles involve **maintaining an organization's IT equipment and troubleshooting technical issues for employees or customers**. The median pay is a respectable \$57,910 a year, according to the **BLS**.
- ▶ **What if the entry-level job posting asks for one or two years of experience?**
 - ▶ Keep in mind that the **qualifications listed for a job are what the hiring manager would ideally like** to have in a candidate. It **does not mean**, however, that the **person eventually hired will have all of them**.
 - ▶ If you are **confident that you have the skills necessary to do the job, go for it**. Just make sure **in your cover letter to emphasize how the experiences you do have are part of what makes you a great candidate (i.e., matches the job description)**.

FIND AN ENTRY-LEVEL IT JOB

PART 2: 5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience from [Start a Cyber Career](#). The best way to build cyber security experience when you don't have a job/experience is to:

- ▶ **STEP 1: Build a base level of technical knowledge to share.**
 - ▶ Spend some amount of **time everyday learning about computers and technology**. *If you spend only **one hour each day for the next four weeks** reading on technology, you will have gained more technical knowledge than 90% of the planet.* This knowledge is what **separates you from everyone else and opens the door for experience opportunities**.
 - ▶ A good place to start is to review **basic computer repair and networking information**, such as material for the **CompTIA A+** or **Network+** exams.
 - ▶ This content is always a **good place to start because every organization has a computer and a basic network**, so these skills can be used to help just about anyone.
- ▶ **STEP 2: Implement some sort of technology on a personal level as proof.**
 - ▶ Almost everyone that has no experience starts building experience by **working on odd technology tasks for family and friends**.
 - ▶ This could be **repairing a computer for a neighbor, setting up an internet router for your house, setting up a new computer for a grandparent or installing Wi-Fi in a friend's house**.
 - ▶ These are all **basic tasks that you can figure out how to do since you've been learning in Step #1**.

HOW CAN YOU GET CYBER SECURITY EXPERIENCE
WITHOUT A JOB? ...

5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience (continued):

- ▶ **STEP 3: Gain real-world technical experience in a volunteer setting.**
 - ▶ So far, nothing we've done is really resume worthy or would convince an employer to give us a job. In this step, we'll change that by **providing technical help to a non-profit organization in a volunteer arrangement.**
 - ▶ **Volunteering**, or what I call related volunteer experience, is **critical for your efforts to gain cyber security experience**, because these things get to **go directly onto the resume.**
 - ▶ **Unfortunately**, they are an **aspect of a resume that many people overlook.** **Work-related volunteer experience can have a positive impact on a resume** in that it can **substitute for basic experience for those that have none**, and it **speaks positively about someone's goodwill and personality.**
 - ▶ Think about it: **Most nonprofits and local organizations have technical support needs but do not have technical support resources.** With that in mind, **brainstorm the organizations that you, your family and your friends are associated with.** These groups are easier to get connected with because you're already connected in some way.
 - ▶ Make sure the **volunteer experience** will (1) be **valuable by meeting a true NEED**, (2) **result in a positive IMPACT for organization**, and (3) **leverage your expertise & technical knowledge.**

... HOW CAN YOU GET CYBER SECURITY EXPERIENCE
WITHOUT A JOB? ...

5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience (continued):

▶ **STEP 4: Start attending cyber security competitions.**

- ▶ Now is the time to take the **final step in our four-step experience building process**. This step is so **often overlooked by beginners**. It's time to begin attending cyber competitions.
- ▶ **First**, there are **cyber security competitions everywhere**, and they **run at least monthly in most cases**. **Second, many are free**. **Third, most don't require any background knowledge**. Just **sign up and bring your laptop**. **Fourth, *all of them provide a great opportunity to get experience & network!***
- ▶ To get moving on this step, just do a **Google search for cyber security competitions or “capture the flag” competitions in your area**.
- ▶ To learn more about cybersecurity competitions, what they are, and how they work, **check out this article**.

... HOW CAN YOU GET CYBER SECURITY EXPERIENCE
WITHOUT A JOB? ...

5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience (continued):

- ▶ **STEP 5: Tell everyone you know about your cybersecurity work plans/success!**
 - ▶ One step that many of us overlook and feel uncomfortable with, is **advertising what we do and our successes**. We have to put the work in AND we also need to tell others about the work that we are doing and want to do.
 - ▶ Many prefer to operate under the radar. But **it's best if you can get the word out about what you accomplished in the first four steps**.
 - ▶ Tell your NETWORK about your interest in cybersecurity, what you're learning, where you volunteered, and the cybersecurity competitions you went to.
 - ▶ This will help spread the word about your interest in getting more experience, and it will help you feel like you're becoming part of the cybersecurity culture.
 - ▶ **TIP: EXPAND your LinkedIn Network by marketing yourself digitally IN PHASES!** (1) **FOLLOWER** - (do not Connect at first) companies/people of interest (industry, work, jobs), (2) **CONSUMER** - read or watch their posts, (3) **ENGAGER** - like &/or comment on their posts, (4) **PROMOTER** - share your content/ideas, (5) **respond to COMMENTS** on your posts to START a conversation, (6) **request to CONNECT & include a note**, and (7) **MESSAGE** in real time.

... HOW CAN YOU GET CYBER SECURITY EXPERIENCE
WITHOUT A JOB?

Other Questions or Comments?

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Job Opportunity Discussion
(trends, recruiters, jobs available ...)

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Articles with job search info, tools, templates, other job search links ...:

- ▶ How To Get Entry Level Tech Jobs With No Experience – [Best Companies AZ](#)
- ▶ What does entry-level mean? – [Resume.com](#)
- ▶ What Is an Entry-Level Job? – [Indeed.com](#)
- ▶ 11 High-Paying Jobs In Tech—No Experience Required – [SkillCrush.com](#)
- ▶ How To Get a Cybersecurity Job With No Experience – [Indeed.com](#)
- ▶ 5 Tips to Get a Cybersecurity Job With No Experience – [Offensive Security](#)
- ▶ How to Get Into Cybersecurity With No Experience? – [Intellectual Point](#)
- ▶ How to Start a Cyber Security Career – [wikiHow](#)
- ▶ 5 Proven Ways to Get Cybersecurity Experience – [Start a Cyber Career](#)
- ▶ How to Start a Cyber Security Career in 2022? – [Great Learning](#)
- ▶ 50 Types of Programming Languages and What They Do – [Indeed.com](#)
- ▶ Python Programming Language – [Python.org](#)

Note: Each article includes links to additional job search/career information.

**QUESTIONS AND
OTHER JOB SEARCH ARTICLES**

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+++++ ISSA RALEIGH CHAPTER CAREER SERVICE RESOURCES +++++

- **Website** → Membership Career Services → <https://raleigh.issa.org/career-services/>
- **LinkedIn** → <https://www.linkedin.com/company/issa-raleigh-chapter>
- **Facebook** → <https://www.facebook.com/groups/raleighissa/>
- **Twitter** → <https://twitter.com/RaleighISSA>