


# How to Get an Entry Level IT Helpdesk or Technical Support Job

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Information Technology (IT) is not rocket science.

Okay, it can be, but you don't have to have a degree in computer science to enjoy a career in IT. The people on the front line of IT are the help desk or technical support people. If you want to use a military analogy, these are the people deep in the trenches. They are your first line of defense for computer problems. And, if you are stout of heart and sharp of mind, you could get a career alongside them.



## Tech Support Career Outlook

According to Computerworld's 2015 Forecast survey, "30% of respondents said they plan to hire for this skill in the next 12 months." US News says the median salary for a computer support specialist is \$60,180. Keep calm, you're more likely to start in the \$30,000 range.

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Those numbers make IT help desk or tech support careers look like a good career path in IT. Increased employment opportunities and pretty good pay, right?

According to another Computerworld article ["IT jobs will grow 22% through 2020, says U.S."](#), the growth projections aren't to be relied on. In the article, Ron Hira, an associate professor of public policy at the Rochester Institute of Technology said,

"Volatile occupations tend to be subject to bad forecasts, and it's clear that computer occupation employment levels are very hard to forecast."

## There's No Life Like IT

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Computers run 24/7. Consider that. Tech support workers often work in shifts and are expected to be on-call. You also tend to hear only about the problems, and people are often in a foul mood when you meet them. It can be a pretty thankless job. In fact, you may even shoulder the blame for things beyond your control.



Consider that IT is always changing and evolving. You will have to keep pace as well. Some progressive companies allot time and money for additional training, but many will expect you to learn on your own time and your own dime. Add that to your shift work and being on-call, and it can become more of a lifestyle than a career.

Make sure it's a lifestyle that you really want and can live with. Make sure that your spouse or other people in your life can live with it as well. If you're good with that, carry on reading to see how to break into the career.

## Know Your Stuff

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You need, "...some computer knowledge, but not necessarily a post-secondary degree."

The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) suggests this minimum requirement. That's a pretty wide open suggestion. You can break into the field with just [a few computer courses](#), but like many careers, the more you know the better your odds of getting hired.

[Get Tech Skills You Need At These Top 7 Online Course Sites](#) [Get Tech Skills You Need At These Top 7 Online Course Sites](#) It's not only about learning programming languages, but also the little unnoticed tech skills that could take you further in your career. Iterate to the next version of you. Class is in session. [Read More](#)

A degree in computer science, or something similar, would be your best bet and carry you further up the career ladder. Still, a college certificate or associate degree will take you pretty far. Those take less time and less money, so if time and money are a concern this is a good path.



People with a few years work experience and some [self-learned computer skills](#) may want to look at industry certification.

[Take it from Microsoft! 8 Best Free Ebooks from MSDN's Huge Collection](#) [Take it from Microsoft! 8 Best Free Ebooks from MSDN's Huge Collection](#) Microsoft released almost 300 free eBooks. We've sorted through them all and picked picked some of the best for private and professional use. [Read More](#)

The **[CompTIA A+ certification](#)** is arguably the best place to start. You'll get a solid foundation in the technology and customer service skills. From there you can continue with other CompTIA certifications or move into more vendor specific certification programs. Microsoft, Cisco, Apple, and [Linux](#) all have certification programs that are highly valued in the IT world. Plus, they tend to be more up to date than a college or university program.

[11 Shortcuts For Learning Linux In Record Time](#) [11 Shortcuts For Learning Linux In Record Time](#) If you'd like to learn Linux, but want some ways to speed up the process, here are ten shortcuts you can use to learn as fast as possible. [Read More](#)

The complete package is a blend of formal education and certification. It's not necessary, but it's also not frowned upon. Most people in tech support don't start out with that but build up



to it over the years.

## Show Your Stuff

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You've got your diploma, degree, certifications...all the proof that you have the basic skills. So do a few thousand other people. What can you do to make sure that you get the interview?

## Professional Plain Resume

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You're trying to get a job that requires you to know the facts and make them crystal clear. Anything other than a basic professional resume probably won't do you any good. It may even do you harm. Let your words speak for you, not fancy fonts, graphics, or colors. The goal of all tech support is to keep it simple.

How To Write A Resume With The Help Of 8 Ivy School Guides How To Write A Resume With The Help Of 8 Ivy School Guides Trying to build the perfect resume? Check out these free resume tips from some of the best schools that make up the Ivy League. [Read More](#)

## Highlight Transferable Skills

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What's a transferable skill?

Here's an example: you've never worked in tech support before, but you have worked in an oil change garage. There you performed inspections, solved small mechanical problems, recorded your work, interacted with the customer, and maybe did a little sales. You did all that in about 30 minutes.



You can see that inspecting, problem solving, tracking work, interpersonal, and sales skills are all mandatory on the help desk. Tons of jobs can give you those skills. But you did it in 30 minutes or less, and you did it well. Now you can prove that you can work under pressure and deadlines. That will set you apart. These are the soft-skills that will make a huge difference for you — both in getting the job and doing it well.

6 Soft Skills Every Technology Worker Needs for Career Success 6 Soft Skills Every Technology Worker Needs for Career Success Some special skills are lacking in the IT field.

For career success, you need the right attitude. Here are six important soft skills that'll get you noticed at your next IT job interview. [Read More](#)

Dig deep into your experience. Find those things that the job requires that you didn't even realize you were already doing. Those are the things that will show you've got more going for you than just book learning.

## Nothing Personal

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To help people you do need to be personable; not personal. Employers are going to check that out about you. They're going to scope you out all over the web. [Take that personal stuff as offline as possible](#). If you're taking part in Twitter fights or trolling in comments, they may decide you're not someone they want associated with their company. They want you to be their face to the world.

[Protect Yourself With Facebook's Privacy Check-up Tool](#) [Protect Yourself With Facebook's Privacy Check-up Tool](#) Facebook has a privacy problem. It's no secret. You hear stories about that every other day. So to help users understand their settings better, Facebook has released a new tool called Privacy Check-up. [Read More](#)

## It's Not an Interview, It's an Audition

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You know they've read your cover letter and resume, and they've researched you online. They've decided about 95% whether you're the one for the job. Don't go in there expecting to regurgitate what they already know about you, and impress them.

Look up [different types of interview questions](#), there are sites online that tell you about the common ones. Don't just memorize how those sites recommend you answer. Make the answer your own. Go the extra mile and have a friend shoot random questions at you. Video that. Watch it and see how you're presenting yourself.

[8 Websites To Get Tips On Job Interview Questions & Answers](#) [8 Websites To Get Tips On Job Interview Questions & Answers](#) [Read More](#)



Look up different types of interviews, too. Sometimes the answers to the questions aren't as important as your response to the situation. Maybe they make you wait, and have the receptionist chat you up. That's a good way to see how you are with someone who doesn't hold your future in their hands. Do you treat them with as much respect as you would your future boss?

They might walk you into a room with several interviewers, just to see how you respond to pressure from groups. They may even pop a time-restricted quiz on you. It might have something to do with a 'right fit' test for the job. Be prepared, don't get thrown off. If you get the job, you're going to be walking into unknown situations every day for years. Prove you can handle it.



**A good secret weapon is a portfolio.** They aren't just for creatives anymore! If you've built your own media center computer, did some hardcore electronics DIY, or wrote a few apps of your own, document that. Take lots of pictures. Document your steps and the reasons why you did what you did. Show the results you attained with the end product. Now you're not just talking the talk, you're showing that you've walked the walk.

[DIY Budget HTPC Media Center Build and Giveaway](#) [DIY Budget HTPC Media Center Build](#)

and Giveaway We built a sub-\$400 yet energy-efficient HTPC media center running Ubuntu. Now, we're giving it away. [Read More](#)

## It Ain't Over, Even When It's Over

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The end of the interview isn't the end of the trial. Think customer care. When your customer walks out the door, you want them to know you're still there for him, next time he needs a hand. Some may think it's old-fashioned, but sending a thank you card or a brief, but professional, thank you e-mail is just good manners. Manners are no longer something everyone has—it's a skill in itself.



If you get the call that you didn't get the job, it's okay to ask why. But do it in a way that shows you want to learn what that company needs so that you might learn it to improve yourself. In the biz, that's called initiative. Another tech support skill.

## Get to Work

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That's it. You've got the tech skills and [the soft skills](#). You've presented yourself professionally in a resume, interview, and online. All that's left to do is keep shaking the trees and see what fruit comes down. Stay positive, be patient and persistent. Keep learning. That job, and career, will come.

For more help, look at these [mistakes to avoid on your job application](#) and [watch out for employment scams](#).

[Don't Get Fooled by Employment Scams: How They Work](#) [Don't Get Fooled by Employment Scams: How They Work](#) If you're desperate for work or a better paid job you could be fooled employment scams. Here's what to look out for and stay safe. [Read More](#)

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