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Working in

# computers & IT



Includes 17  
real-life case  
studies covering:

- IT in business
- Behind the scenes
- Installation, support and service
- Multimedia

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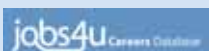
Computers and IT

# Contents

## What is this booklet about?

Working in computers and IT is one of a series of publications featuring people working in different jobs, professions and careers. Each person tells you what the job is really like, including the good things and the bad, offering advice on how to get in and the skills you might need for that job. You can also find out about the qualifications you will need, what training you can get and how much you might be paid. You can also read about the route each person took to get their current job.

## How can I find out more?



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**Other formats of this booklet are available – for details see back cover.**

## Key to salary icons

£ up to £12,000

££ £12,001 to £19,000

£££ over £19,000

These symbols represent the typical starting salary for the job featured in the case study.

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# So you want to work with computers?

**There are very few jobs these days that do not rely on computer skills in one form or another – from manufacturing and the computerised checkouts in supermarkets, to computer-aided design and the science of robotics. In fact, around 21 million people in the UK use IT at work every day.**

It should be no surprise, then, that the people who create the computer hardware and software we use for work and leisure, and the people who help keep these systems running, are in high demand.

In this booklet, we introduce you to a wide range of people who work closely with computers and IT. Some use their expertise to advise companies on the most effective ways to use IT. Others combine design skills with computer know-how in jobs like multimedia and web design, while those with an aptitude for explaining their knowledge may work in IT training or technical support.

## What skills will I need?

A skill that all these people share is the ability to analyse a problem and work out a solution. People skills are just as important. Even in the case of technical roles, most jobs in the IT industry involve a lot of interaction with other people – from fellow team members to customers and suppliers. Employers are particularly interested in people with strong communication and team-working skills.

Specific computer and IT skills vary depending on the role. Programmers, for example, need a thorough understanding of the different programming languages. Web designers and developers need expertise in the functions and features of the internet as well as graphic design skills. IT consultants and project managers need an excellent grasp of how businesses use IT and how they could use it more effectively.

## What sorts of people work in IT?

You will see from the profiles in this booklet that people come into IT from a broad range of backgrounds with many different qualifications. Common to all the roles, however, is a need for a logical mind and a creative approach to problem-solving.

## Can I get a job straight from school?

As IT encompasses so many different skills and job roles, there is no standard route to your first job. Some people enter from school and train on the job or take part-time courses, while others study for IT or related qualifications at college or university.

Some may start off in a different role in an industry that interests them and then specialise in the use of computers in that sector. Someone in retail sales, for example, might become an expert in explaining and selling computer systems to customers.

Look at each profile for an insight into how these people got into their careers.

## What about relevant qualifications?

For people who start off with a qualification in general computing, the possibilities are very varied. Many people change career paths as they discover which specialist areas really interest them.

Some people enter the IT industry with a degree or HNC/HND in subjects such as IT, computing or computer science, or BTEC national diplomas and NVQs/SVQs in computer-related subjects. There are also opportunities for school leavers with A levels and GCSEs.

Increasingly, many of the major software providers are offering their own product-specific qualifications. These are widely available through IT agencies and training providers, and are open to people looking to begin a career in IT as well as those already employed within the industry.

## What about future prospects?

The IT industry is extremely varied and has links to almost every other industry. As a result, IT qualifications can lead almost anywhere, and IT experience and qualifications can offer you great flexibility in your future career.



Organisations of all sizes rely on computerised systems, the internet and electronic communication. In this section, we meet people whose IT skills help to keep businesses running effectively.

# Database developer

**jobs4u** Database administrator

**Sarah Roberts** works as a database developer for Atos Origin, an international IT services company. Her work involves building and testing all kinds of databases.



## What does your job involve?

I work within an application development team. Together, we design and build databases for our customers, who use them for a variety of purposes, such as storing staff information, keeping track of sales or stock records, or generating reports. We also support them if they have any queries or problems.



### Sarah's route

- A levels.
- Various jobs.
- Degree in Business Operation and Control.
- One year of work experience with the NHS.
- Training courses with her current employer.



### Sarah's tips

- Work hard at college or university, then get yourself a good 'trainee' role with a company that will look after you, and give you lots of experience and training.
- The nature of the work makes frequent training a must, so make sure you concentrate on companies who invest in their staff.

## What are your main responsibilities?

The majority of my work involves designing and building the databases that sit behind some of the IT systems used by our customers. I also help to write the computer code used by the various systems to interact with the database.

When a new project begins, we initially spend some time designing the database. Basically, this means that we think about what information we want to store, how we plan to store it and how to link it all together. Once the design phase is finished, we move on to building the database. This is called the development phase. Once the database is up and running, we test it to pick up any problems that may have been missed in previous phases.

## What hours do you work?

I work 37 hours a week, from Monday to Friday. Occasionally, I may be required to work overtime if there is a deadline to meet, but I would always be paid or given time off in lieu for these extra hours.

## What is your working environment like?

I work in a modern, comfortable office in the centre of a small town. Occasionally, I visit customers in their workplace, but the majority of my work is done from my own desk.

## Who do you work with?

I work in a team of about ten people, with a team leader and a project manager. We are all based in the same office and work on similar projects. I have occasional contact with clients, but the majority of my work is done either on my own or with colleagues.

## What skills do you need for your job?

Obviously, a strong interest in IT and computers is a must. You also need the ability to work on your own and as part of a team. As with most technical IT roles, you need to have good logical thinking skills.

## What training have you had?

Since I started in my current role, I have been on numerous training courses, some to develop people skills and some to develop the technical skills required in my job. I also have a Degree in Business Operation and Control.

## Do you use any tools or equipment?

Everything I do is PC based. I use a good specification PC with some of the latest database development tools and servers.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I like the team environment and the technical side of the job. On the downside, things can get a bit hectic when you have to meet a tight deadline!





# IT project manager

jobs4u Project manager

## What are the main challenges?

Technology moves at a rapid pace, so keeping up with new methods or systems can be quite a challenge. This normally means going on courses or doing some online interactive learning.

## How do you see your future?

There are opportunities if I want to progress into database design, or I can stay in development. I think I would like to stay in development, as I enjoy being more involved on a day-to-day basis.



### Related jobs

Internet/Web professional  
IT product developer  
Software developer/programmer  
Systems analyst  
Technical support person



### Salary information

New database administrators and developers may start on around £15,000 to £18,000 a year. Top salaries in large companies can rise to £45,000 or more.



### Getting in

- There is no standard route into database jobs, and roles range from database operators and administrators through to testers and developers.
- It is possible to take a degree, HNC/HND in subjects such as IT, computer science or software engineering, or BTEC national diplomas and NVQs/SVQs in computer-related subjects.
- Larger companies may offer training courses, but smaller employers will expect knowledge in specific computer languages, software packages or operating systems.

**Gavin Zephir** is an IT project manager with Accenture. He is responsible for bringing together teams and managing budgets. He also oversees the development of new applications, or the upgrading of existing ones, for various companies.



## Can you describe your role?

I manage IT projects for banks, typically creating new web-based applications or improving their existing systems. An IT project begins with a set of requirements from the client and then involves steering the work through the design, build and testing phases. Each project normally lasts from six months to a year.

## What are your main responsibilities?

I have to ensure each project is a success. 'Success' to some clients might mean an increase in the number of customers using a system, or an improvement in the quality of that system.

To get these results, I have to propose solutions to the client, and agree and manage the budgets and resources for the entire life of the project. I also manage the design teams to make sure we get results on time and to a high standard.

## What does a typical project involve?

My work starts with planning timescales, resource requirements and budgets. Then, the project team is created, which involves interviewing potential team members. Once the team has been created, the real project work begins, and my work is then about team management. Finally, towards the end of the project, it is my responsibility to produce the final project reports and hand over the completed application to the client.

## What hours do you work?

I work around 45 hours a week, with occasional weekend work and the potential for long commutes on Mondays and Fridays. However, we do have a policy that states you should not leave your home before 7.00am on Monday and should return by 7.00pm on Friday.

## What is your working environment like?

The work is typically on the client site, which can be anywhere across Europe or even the world. I do have a base office, but rarely work there as I am always on client sites.



### Gavin's route

- Degree in Computer Science.
- Joined Accenture in London.
- Transferred to Manchester.



### Gavin's tip

- Working your way up through the different job levels/grades can give you a great advantage. Some people are so keen to reach manager level that they don't really grasp what it's like to work under real pressure along the way.



### Who do you work with?

It's an ever-changing mix of client staff and colleagues. Colleagues can be from all parts of the company, ranging from those based in the same office as me to those working in other offices around the world. At the moment, I am working with colleagues from our Indian offices.

### What skills do you need for your job?

Technical knowledge can be invaluable in planning and managing projects. A large part of the work involves interacting with both junior members of the team and more senior client staff, so you need to be able to communicate effectively both in person and in writing.

### Why did you choose this type of work?

It gives me the chance to work with many different organisations without changing jobs. I get a constantly changing environment, but the continuity of working for the same company.

### What are the main challenges?

The deadlines required are always challenging to meet. Assembling a team can also be a challenge, as you have to try and get a good mix of people, all with the right skills and experience.



### How do you see your future?

I see the projects I work on getting bigger and better as I gain more project management experience.



#### Related jobs

Business adviser  
Business analyst  
Management consultant  
Manager  
Quality manager  
Systems analyst



#### Salary information

Starting salaries range from around £17,000 to £28,000 a year, depending on the size of company and your qualifications and experience. Typical salaries for project managers with experience and in more senior positions range from around £40,000 to £80,000.



#### Getting in

- Most project managers have a degree, though not necessarily in a computing-related subject.
- You should be able to show you understand how computing applications work within an organisation.
- Some people may start with lower qualifications, such as an HND, and receive training in their company, but most employers want higher qualifications or proof of experience.
- Competition for the best jobs is fierce. Work experience can be an advantage.



**Laura Duffey** works for Shell International's oil products businesses. She plans IT strategies that will meet their needs, both now and in the future.

### Can you describe your role?

My main role is to work out our computer software plans for the next ten years. We need to ensure that we choose software that can support the company's future business processes.

### What is your weekly routine?

My work is extremely varied. In a typical week, I analyse our stock of applications. This is a database of all the applications in use within our business. I also look for opportunities to make cost reductions, by cutting back on the number of applications we use for instance, or by introducing new technology. Another part of my job involves preparing reports on how we perform against the measurements and targets we have set.

### What hours do you work?

Working in a global organisation requires some flexibility. If I have meetings with colleagues in Asia, I may begin work earlier on a particular morning, while having a conference call with colleagues from the USA sometimes requires working later into the evening.

### What is your working environment like?

I am usually based in our central London office, but occasionally work from home too. My role requires some travel, mainly to our other key offices in the Netherlands, the USA and Malaysia.

# Portfolio analyst

jobs4u Systems analyst



## Who do you work with?

I work in a small team spread across Australia, the USA, the UK and the Netherlands, so keeping in touch with colleagues and virtual team-working (communicating via computer technology rather than in person) is very important.

## What skills do you need for your job?

A broad IT background helps in this role. I had previous experience in systems engineering, service development, IT consultancy and project management before moving into a more business-focused role.

Strong interpersonal skills are also essential as you will have to work with many different people from the top of the organisation to the people actually developing and using your systems.

## Why did you choose this type of work?

I have a broad IT background within the company and a love of working in a fast-paced environment with lots of different people, so I felt this area would suit me well.

## What training have you had?

I graduated from university with a Degree in Medical Biochemistry. While at university, I took part in the Shell Technology Enterprise Programme, which places undergraduates in businesses for an eight-week project.

My project involved developing a waste exchange scheme and I won a national award for my work. During the project, I developed IT skills and realised I would be interested in a career in IT.

Since joining Shell, I have taken various technical, business and skills development training courses, and have also gained several professional qualifications.



### Laura's route

- Degree in Medical Biochemistry.
- Shell Technology Enterprise Programme.
- Training courses and professional qualifications while working for Shell.



### Laura's tip

- Don't feel overly pressurised to specialise in one area. I experienced many different aspects of IT and have found my broad background very beneficial.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I love the variety of activities and working with so many different groups of people in many different countries. The one thing I dislike is having to keep up to date with all the necessary administrative work, such as writing up notes from meetings. I'm definitely more of an action-oriented person!

## How do you see your future?

I would like my career to progress towards general management or leadership within an IT or business discipline. There are also some great opportunities to work overseas.



### Related jobs

Business adviser  
Business analyst  
Management consultant  
Network manager  
Project manager



### Salary information

Newly qualified analysts may earn around £25,000 a year. Experienced analysts may earn from £35,000 to £45,000. The highest salaries may be up to £50,000 a year, or more.



### Getting in

- Almost all business or systems analysts have a degree in an IT or business-related subject. Many have postgraduate qualifications.
- It is sometimes possible to start in basic computing work and progress to become a systems analyst. Alternatively, some people work in another area of the business and use their broad experience to move into systems analysis.
- Employers are increasingly looking for people with qualifications from software manufacturers.



# Network manager

**jobs4u** Network manager

**Jenny Rainger** works in IT Network Support for EAC Language Centres UK. She has to ensure people in the organisation always have a reliable computer service in order to communicate with each other and the outside world.



## Can you describe your role?

My role involves the day-to-day management of the IT network, ensuring the computers and servers are always accessible, and that users' computers can communicate with the servers and the internet.

## What are your main responsibilities?

My main responsibilities are to design, install and administer local area networks – the linked computers and servers run by an organisation – and internet access. I also provide help for users who are having problems with their computers.

Security is a vital part of the job, so I have to ensure that the system is safe from unauthorised users and hackers. It's also my job to make sure we have back-ups of data in case there are any problems and files need to be restored.

## What is your daily routine?

I always start the day by checking the network log files to ensure that no one has gained access to the system without permission. I do a fair bit of troubleshooting, solving problems with access to the internet, and dealing with password problems, for example. I also try to spend at least some of the day developing projects to improve the company's IT security and stability.

## What hours do you work?

I'm contracted to work 9.00am to 5.30pm, from Monday to Friday, but I'm on call in case the system fails, so I occasionally have to work in the evenings and at weekends.

## What is your working environment like?

I work in an office, but the main servers and networking equipment are situated in a small room in another part of the building. I make regular trips to our language schools and to our summer language centres around the country.

## Who do you work with?

I am the only person who deals with IT in our company, so I work with a wide range of people. I provide support for everyone from employees to customers.

## What skills do you need for your job?

You need to have a common-sense approach to problems. You also need to be able to stay calm in stressful situations. You must be prepared to get dirty occasionally – in a small company, you may have to do the installation work yourself.

## What training have you had?

Whilst learning the practical side of the job, I also studied for an HNC in Computing at evening classes. After two years, I gained a place at university and completed a Degree in Network Computing.

## What are the main challenges?

One of the biggest challenges is being the only IT person in the office. I can't ask colleagues for advice!

### Jenny's route

- Secretarial college.
- Website design and administration.
- HNC in Computing.
- Degree in Network Computing.

### Jenny's tips

- Gain practical skills – build a small home network, investigate the different network protocols and how they work and interrelate.
- Keep up to date with developing technologies and try to find a position in a computing department – you absorb a lot of information and knowledge from people that have been in the role for some time.





# IT tutor

jobs4u IT trainer

## How do you see your future?

I would like to study for a Masters degree in a related subject in my spare time. The future for my role depends on how the company grows. I could end up running multiple interconnected IT infrastructures throughout the UK, with a hundred or so users.

## Related jobs

Computer service technician  
Database administrator  
Software developer/programmer  
Systems analyst  
Technical support person

## Salary information

Starting salaries for network trainees typically range from around £15,000 to £18,000 a year. Experienced network managers may earn £40,000 or more, but salaries depend on the size and complexity of the network. Contracting and freelance work can be highly paid.

## Getting in

- Most network managers have a degree or HNC/HND in subjects such as computer studies and IT.
- Others work their way up in a computer department and may study for qualifications while working.
- You can begin training in IT straight from school with GCSEs/S grades (A-C/1-3) in English, maths, IT and science. There is also a range of college courses, including BTEC courses. Apprenticeships may be available.
- Experience of working with computers and networks is a big advantage in getting your first job.

**Ruksana Alam** is an IT tutor with Highways to Opportunities, a not-for-profit organisation that offers free training in IT and computing.



## What are your main responsibilities?

I train students to use computers. Students usually work at their own pace, but I need to be there to guide them through and help them when they run into difficulties or have questions.

I also develop training materials and co-ordinate our drop-in centre, which is open to anyone wanting to develop their IT skills.

## What is your weekly routine?

I train students three days a week. The other days are set aside for administrative work and for running the drop-in facility. I also have to attend meetings to update others on my projects, and to find out about other projects that are happening.

## What hours do you work?

I have to work 144 hours each month, but the hours are flexible. Of course, I have to ensure that I am available when we have training scheduled.

## What is your work environment like?

I share an office with my colleague, but I deliver the training in our IT suite, which is a purpose-built training area with 15 PCs. We also have a quiet room for exams.

## Who do you work with?

I work most closely with my manager, but also work with other trainers and the learners themselves. I deal with suppliers and computer support representatives when I have to order stationery or when a computer is out of order.

## Ruksana's route

- GNVQs and A levels.
- HND in Business IT.
- City & Guilds teaching course.
- Certificate in Education.

## Ruksana's tips

- Do some voluntary work first to get a real feel for the job.
- In teaching, remember that you have to be constantly aware of what the students are achieving to be able to give them the right kind of support.



### What skills do you need for your job?

You need a level three qualification in your specialist subject – IT in my case – and a teaching certificate for further education. Important practical skills include a knowledge of hardware and up-to-date software knowledge. In terms of personality, you need lots and lots of patience, and a sense of humour.

### Why did you choose this type of work?

This type of work can be very rewarding. At the start of a course, most students are terrified of switching on a computer and think it might break if they press the wrong button. By the time they finish the programme, I can see the difference I have made. The students have become more independent and get pleasure out of achieving their goals.

### What training have you had?

I have an HND in Business IT from Manchester Metropolitan University, and a City & Guilds 7307 in Teaching Adults in Further Education. I have also gone on to complete the Certificate in Education and am now a fully qualified tutor.

### What do you like/dislike about your job?

I have a passion for working with computers and for working with people, but I dislike the way training is becoming more target-driven. The administrative work also restricts the quality time I am able to spend with the learners.

### What are the main challenges?

Sometimes computers don't do what you tell them and finding a solution can be challenging. Sometimes students don't do what you tell them either – and that can be difficult too!

### How do you see your future?

I would like the opportunity to step up the ladder – I see myself as a curriculum manager.



#### Related jobs

Further education lecturer  
Learning mentor  
Technical support person  
Training instructor  
Training manager



#### Salary information

Starting salaries vary according to the organisation you work for, but IT trainers may start on between £17,000 and £20,000 a year. Experienced trainers can earn up to about £25,000. Senior IT trainers may earn £30,000 a year, or more.



#### Getting in

- There are no standard qualifications for this kind of work, but you do need knowledge and experience of computing plus an aptitude for teaching.
- Some trainers start in other IT roles, perhaps as a technician, and gain training skills through work experience. Others qualify as trainers or teachers, and then add IT to their specialist skills.
- There is a huge range of qualifications in IT and computing subjects – from GCSEs and A levels, or the equivalent, to degrees and postgraduate courses.
- Some organisations, including all further education colleges, expect trainers to have a qualification in teaching or training adults, or to be prepared to work towards one.



**Mohammed Kholwadia** works for Manchester-based eSAY Solutions Ltd, specialising in building computer applications to help businesses.

### Can you describe your role?

My role is to turn the customer's requirements into working computer applications. I get involved in most areas of the development process, from gathering information about what the customer wants, to speaking to users, writing the application and helping the customer to implement it.

### What are your main responsibilities?

I write computer programmes for clients. I write the detailed computer programming code and speak to the people who will eventually use the programme to make sure I'm giving them what they want. I help design the layout of the interface (the screen that users see), so that the final programme is easy to use. I also get involved in testing my application and the applications written by other users to make sure they work properly.

### What is your daily/weekly routine?

About 85 per cent of my day is spent designing the database or doing the coding for the application. The rest of my time is taken up with testing the finished application and supporting users as they test it.

Before a business can benefit from new IT products, somebody has to decide on the solution that is best for them. They must select the products to buy and ensure their users understand how to use them. The process can involve a number of people working in a variety of jobs.

# Software developer

**jobs4u** Software developer/programmer



## What hours do you work?

I usually work 40 hours per week. I can start at any time before 9.30am and go home any time after 4.30pm. Some paid overtime is available. Given the nature of project work, deadlines have to be adhered to so that we give the customer a good service.

## What is your working environment like?

I'm mainly based in the office, but I occasionally spend time at a customer's site. I can work from home sometimes, as long as it fits in with what is needed for the project I'm working on.



### Mohammed's route

- GCSEs.
- NVQ in Motor Mechanics.
- Advanced web authoring and HTML courses.
- Part-time HNC in Computing.



### Mohammed's tips

- This is the job for you if you're a logical thinker with a scientific approach.
- You also need to be very reliable and able to work well as part of a team.

## Who do you work with?

On a day-to-day basis, I work closely with the senior developers and directors. I will often speak to the end-users or their managers. Depending on the size of the project, I may work on my own or in a small team.

## What skills do you need for your job?

You need good people skills, as they help you fit in with the team and communicate well. You also need the basic skills of software development, usually coupled with proficiency in one or more software development languages.

## What training have you had?

After my GCSEs, I started off with, believe it or not, an NVQ in Motor Mechanics! I then went on to do courses in advanced web authoring and HTML, before taking a part-time HNC in Computing. This covered computer solutions and platforms, software construction tools, data analysis, system analysis and programming.

## What are the main challenges?

It can sometimes be hard to break problems down into manageable chunks. There's also the challenge of delivering the software to deadlines, but it's something I enjoy.

## How do you see your future?

I would like to lead a small team, taking responsibility for the full developmental process, from meeting with the client for the first time to implementing the project.



### Related jobs

Computer games designer  
Internet/Web professional  
IT product developer  
Network manager  
Systems analyst



### Salary information

Trainee software developers may start on salaries ranging from £16,000 to £22,000 a year. Experienced developers may earn up to £30,000 a year, or more. Contracting and freelance work can be more highly paid, especially if the developer has specialist skills.



### Getting in

- Most software developers have a degree or HNC/HND in a computing-related subject, such as computer science, software developing, electronics or maths.
- Some people start as trainee programmers, with A levels or equivalent qualifications. It is sometimes possible to start in basic computing work and progress to become a software developer.
- Useful courses include BTEC national diplomas in subjects such as computer studies or information technology, and SQA modules in information.
- People with qualifications from software manufacturers, such as Microsoft, Novell and Lotus, are often in demand. These training courses are often expensive, so it is usual for employers to pay for your training in these software packages.



# Computer sales person

**jobs4u** IT technical sales specialist

**Claire Dickinson** works in business development for the computer company Aclass Technology (UK) Ltd. For her, selling products starts with understanding the customer's needs.



## Can you describe your role?

My job involves contacting new and existing customers to win new business from them. I also have to make sure that existing clients are happy with our products and the service we provide, so that they will continue to buy from us in the future.

## What are your main responsibilities?

As well as finding potential customers, I have to introduce them to our products over the phone and, hopefully, in person. I have to understand their business so that I can explain to them how our products will help them succeed.



### Claire's route

- A levels.
- Degree in Business and Management.
- Current role with Aclass Technology.



### Claire's tips

- If you enjoy meeting people and are results-driven, then go for it! Your personality will often make you a success in this role.
- Personally, I think taking a business-based course helps you get the bigger picture.

We sell innovative systems for the education, training and conference sectors. A large part of my job is about building relationships with clients so that they trust us to provide them with quality products and a reliable after-sales service.

## What is your regular routine?

A typical project involves researching a particular market that might have a need for our products, for example, the police service. I find out who the decision makers are within the organisation and make contact with them by letter or telephone to introduce our business.

At this stage, I want to get them interested enough to be able to arrange a visit to see them in person. I can then demonstrate the product and begin negotiations about quantities and prices. Closing the sale means drawing up purchase orders and making sure we deliver what we agreed.

## What hours do you work?

My hours vary because I do a lot of travelling in the UK and abroad. However, general office hours are 9.00am to 5.00pm.

## What is your work environment like?

I am mostly on the road, travelling to different organisations. The company provides me with a car and petrol expenses.

## Who do you work with?

There is a team of four of us in the office, but I also work with suppliers, freelance consultants and, of course, a whole range of clients.

## What skills do you need for your job?

You need to be well organised and self-disciplined. You also need to be confident about talking to new people. This includes being able to change your style to suit the person you are dealing with, which, in turn, requires an ability to 'read' people quite quickly. You really must enjoy selling and have a general awareness of the way businesses work.





### What equipment do you use?

I use a laptop, a data projector and the products that I sell.

### What are the main challenges?

Overcoming objections from people and winning them over to the company and the products is often hard. You always have to be better than your competitors. Also, there's just never enough time!



### Related jobs

Computer service technician  
Internet/Web professional  
IT product developer  
IT trainer  
Technical support person



### Salary information

Most sales people get a basic salary plus commission on their sales. Starting salaries typically range from around £10,000 to £18,000 a year. Experienced sales people may earn between £15,000 and £35,000. Top salaries, including commission, may rise to £50,000 a year, or more.



### Getting in

- There are no set entry qualifications for sales people. Most employers ask for a minimum of GCSEs/S grades (A-C/1-3) including English and maths, or the equivalent. Some people move into a sales role after working in another job within the company.
- An increasing number of applicants have additional qualifications. A degree or an HNC/HND in a subject related to sales, marketing or business administration can be useful.
- Computer sales people often need a qualification or experience in computing or IT, but companies usually train them in their products.
- A driving licence is usually essential.

# IT consultant

jobs4u

Management consultant

**Graham Marwick** is a consultant with IBM. He uses his expertise in software and hardware project management to help other companies in the UK and abroad improve their IT systems.



### Can you describe your role?

I work with my company's clients, managing IT projects within their organisations. I usually work with a large piece of software that can run all the IT systems within one organisation, linking finance systems to distribution, manufacturing to human resources and so on.

### What are your main responsibilities?

I manage large teams of people who programme software and hardware. I also monitor all the financial aspects of the project, tracking our costs, revenue and profit. Other activities include resourcing the project, which means ensuring I have the right people to do the job.



### Graham's route

- Degree in Business Studies.
- Placement year with IBM.
- IBM graduate scheme.



### Graham's tip

- There will always be a situation where you will need somebody else's help. If you have a large network of colleagues who respect and like you, it will be much easier to get assistance with any problems you have.

### What is your weekly routine?

Monday morning is often spent travelling. I usually work at the client site for the duration of any given project. I have worked with companies from all over the UK and Europe. I work from the client site during the week, usually staying in a hotel overnight, although in the past I have stayed in a company apartment. I almost always return home on a Thursday evening, and work from home on a Friday.

### What is your work environment like?

I always work from an office, although I may work from many different ones in any given time period. Sometimes I work from my company's offices and sometimes I work from clients' offices. Virtually all the offices are very pleasant environments to work in.

### Who do you work with?

I work with many people at all levels. On one project that I managed, I met regularly with the client's chief executive, for example. Most of my day-to-day activity, however, is with the project team members, who are all very highly educated IT experts. When giving reports, I work with our accountants, lawyers and senior managers.



## What skills do you need for your job?

The ability to get on with other people is by far the most important skill. Effective communication is key to my role. But you also have to have good problem-solving skills, to be able to analyse situations and balance the pros and cons before making a decision. It also helps if you have a good knowledge of organisations and organisational strategy.

## Why did you choose this type of work?

I was attracted by the opportunities for working abroad or in other parts of the UK, but still being able to travel home at weekends. Also, I have been interested in IT and the advantages of using IT in large organisations ever since I studied business at university.

## What training have you had?

I have a Degree in Business Studies, which gave me a good overview of all areas of business. The company graduate scheme also gave me exposure to the various parts and projects of the business in a period of just 18 months.

## What do you like about your job?

I love the travel – seeing new places and meeting new people from many different cultures. I also enjoy the challenge of my job. I am regularly in situations where my skills are pushed to the limit.

## What are the main challenges?

The biggest challenges are managing relationships. It's important to appreciate that people work differently and have different pressures.



## How do you see your future?

I will remain in my current role for a few more years, managing larger and larger projects. I would then like to complete a Masters in Business Administration (MBA), before returning to internal management within the company, where I could eventually be responsible for general strategy.



### Related jobs

Business adviser  
Business analyst  
Manager  
Network manager  
Systems analyst



### Salary information

Starting salaries may range from around £17,000 to £28,000 a year, depending on the size of company and your qualifications and experience. Typical salaries for senior consultants with experience range from around £40,000 to £80,000 a year.



### Getting in

- Most IT consultants have a degree, though not necessarily in an IT-related subject.
- You should be able to show you have an aptitude for understanding computing networks and applications.
- Some people may start with lower qualifications, such as an HND, and receive training in their company, but most employers want higher qualifications or proof of experience.
- Competition for the best jobs is fierce. Work experience can be an advantage.



**Léonie Watson** is head of accessibility for the internet company, Nomensa. She researches how new and existing websites can be built and made easier to use for people with disabilities.

## Can you describe your role?

I lead research projects that explore new techniques for building websites, and investigate how websites can be made more accessible to people with different disabilities. This includes speaking at industry events and working with different organisations to further accessibility across the digital world.

The most important part of my job is keeping up to date with new developments in web technology and in the 'assistive technologies' that people with disabilities use to access computers and mobile phones.



### Léonie's route

- Degree in Performing Arts.
- Technical support for an internet company.
- Degree in Computer Science.



### Léonie's tips

- If you're lively, thoughtful and communicative, then this is an excellent job to look into.
- Try to get as much experience as you can working on different web technologies.



# Head of accessibility

**jobs4u** Internet/Web professional



## What equipment do you use?

I use a computer for most of my work. I use all the common office applications, such as word processing, email and the internet. As I am blind, I use a piece of software called a 'screen reader' to access my computer and my laptop. Neither has a screen, but they both have electronic speech feedback instead. My mobile phone also has electronic speech installed.

## What is your daily routine?

I arrive at about 8.30am, and normally make a start on my emails. I make a lot of contacts through my work, so I tend to get a lot of emails. Otherwise, my daily routine is quite varied. I might visit our London offices, meet clients or attend meetings for the Usability & Accessibility Working Group (UA-WG) – an industry organisation that I chair.

At the moment, I'm writing up the results from some research we've just completed, and later I'll convert the report into a presentation.

## What skills do you need for your job?

I think the ability to communicate easily with different people, in different ways, is vital. Good technical knowledge, with particular emphasis on web technologies, is also important. The job changes and evolves all the time, so keeping up to date is essential.

## Why did you choose this type of work?

Much of what I'm involved in is on the cutting edge of web technology, so it's exhilarating to be doing things that other companies have not yet even heard of. It's also rewarding to be opening up new technologies to a wider range of users.

## What training have you done?

My training immediately after school has very little to do with my current profession – my first degree was in performing arts! I then went to work in a technical support centre for an internet service provider (ISP), where I remained until I lost my sight. At that point I took a couple of years out to adjust to a new way of doing things, and began a Degree in Computer Science with the Open University.

## What are the main challenges?

Getting projects in on time can be difficult and can often lead to late nights and early mornings. There are also challenges in working with a visual disability. So far I have been able to find the solutions, but there are times when accomplishing a task can really take it out of you.



## What do you like/dislike about your job?

The work I do is often tiring, but never dull, and each new project offers different challenges and opportunities.

## How do you see your future?

Having found a job that offers as much enjoyment, opportunity, excitement and challenge as this, I see no reason to consider moving on.

## Related jobs

Database administrator  
Graphic designer  
Multimedia designer  
Network manager  
Software developer/programmer  
Systems analyst

## Salary information

New entrants may start on around £17,000 a year, but rates vary depending on the actual job role. Experienced web professionals may earn up to £30,000 a year. People with specialist knowledge may earn £40,000 or more.

## Getting in

- Most internet/web professionals have a degree, HNC or HND. Entry to a degree is usually with a minimum of two A levels/three H grades and five GCSEs/S grades (A-C/1-3), or the equivalent. Entry to an HNC/HND course is with at least one A level/two H grades, or the equivalent.
- Computer science, multimedia design or specialised internet/web development are among the most useful subjects to study.
- It is possible to begin training for this type of work straight from school, ideally with GCSEs/S grades (A-C/1-3) in English, maths, IT and science.

# Technical author

**jobs4u** Technical author

**Gareth Davies** works for APT Transtelex Plc in Bristol. The company provides services including authoring, content management, translation, desktop publishing and the printing of completed publications.



## Can you describe your role?

I write instruction guides that describe how to use products. Some guides are quite straightforward, but others are not so simple. I recently worked on a guide for a CCTV system that involved highly technical information.

I'm also involved in desktop publishing (DTP). This may involve creating illustrations, or compiling a foreign language guide from translations.

## What are your main responsibilities?

My job is to produce documentation that is accurate and written to a very high standard. This involves researching the product category and looking at competitors' products, including the variety and styles of publications they produce.

## What hours do you work?

My normal working day is 9.00am to 5.30pm, although I may come in earlier or leave later depending on the project. I sometimes work weekends if there is a tight deadline.

## What is your work environment like?

I work in an office alongside my colleagues. It's a relaxed, friendly office.

## Who do you work with?

I work in a team of authors, illustrators and DTP specialists. Daily contact with project managers, clients and printing companies is also an essential part of the job. Occasionally, I attend client meetings with the publications manager, project manager or a member of the sales team.

## What skills do you need for your job?

The most important practical skill you need is a good command of the English language. You need to understand who you are writing for, and then tailor the information so it is easy for the target audience to understand. An eye for detail is important too. Experience in authoring or DTP packages is an advantage, but they are easy to learn.

A sense of creativity is also useful – quite often, we're given a blank sheet of paper by the client and left to design a manual from scratch.

## Why did you choose this type of work?

I've always been quite good at English, so it seemed a natural thing to do. I like the design aspect of it as well – creating something from the beginning is always satisfying.

## What training have you had?

After school, I went on to do A levels. I also studied for a Degree in Communication, Authoring and Design at university. The course is tailor-made for people who want to enter the field of technical authoring and design.

## What equipment do you use?

I use a wide range of computers across different operating systems. I also use a lot of software packages, which vary from one project to the next.



### Gareth's route

- A levels.
- Five years' work experience in various jobs.
- Degree in Communication, Authoring and Design.



### Gareth's tips

- Think about what you could write about. There are a lot of specialist areas out there, like engineering and software, so if you want to get a job at a software company get experience or qualifications in a programming language.
- Any experience is always a bonus to employers.



### What do you like most about your job?

I love the variety. You never know what you are going to be documenting next.

### What are the main challenges?

You have to be able to work to strict deadlines, so stress can be a factor. Once a manual goes to print then it is too late to rectify an error, so you have to make sure that it's spot on, every time.

### Related jobs

DTP operator  
Graphic designer  
IT trainer  
Journalist  
Multimedia designer

### Salary information

Typical starting salaries are generally between about £15,000 and £20,000 a year. A senior technical author, or someone working in a highly specialised area, may earn up to £35,000 or more. Income for freelance authors depends on the rates they charge and the number of projects they take on. Hourly rates can vary from £20 to more than £40 an hour.

### Getting in

- There are no set entry requirements, but a good knowledge of English is essential.
- Most technical authors have previous qualifications and experience in scientific, engineering, technical or commercial fields. Many have degrees.
- Some universities and colleges offer courses in technical authorship. There is also a small number of postgraduate courses.

The following three people have a wide range of skills in installing, repairing and helping others with IT equipment. As well as knowledge of the equipment they use, they must have great customer care skills.

# Help desk operator

**jobs4u** Technical support person

**Amanda Tubby** works for Ramsac, a company that provides IT services for businesses. Amanda is the first person a company speaks to when they call with a computer-related problem or question.



### Can you describe your role?

As a member of the support team, I act as the first point of call for any client who needs help with their PC or network.

### What are your main responsibilities?

When people call up, I log their query on our database and ask them questions to try to troubleshoot their problem. This involves getting as much information as I can from the caller and talking them through the steps they can take. I'll ask them what they can see on their screen, and work with them as we try different methods of solving the problem. If I can, I sort out the problem for them in this one call. If it proves too complex, I pass the call on to our more technical team.

### What is your daily routine?

Every day is different, depending on the volume of work and number of calls coming in. We work as a team to respond to a wide range of customer requests.

After a morning briefing to review customer problems, we agree workloads and discuss new issues. If the number of calls drops at any point during the day, I can do other client work – such as dialling in to client systems to check that their back-ups are working and that their anti-virus definitions are up to date.

### What hours do you work?

I work from Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.30pm.

### What is your work environment like?

I work in a lovely open-plan office. We can use a shared kitchen and recreational area that includes a badminton court.

### Who do you work with?

I work in a department of support staff who also answer customer calls. Our customers are all based in small or medium-sized businesses that have contracted their IT needs to us. I report directly to the support manager who has overall responsibility for the team.

### Amanda's route

- GCSEs.
- Working in the support team at Ramsac.
- Studying for a Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MCDST) qualification.

### Amanda's tip

- You have to remember that you will never know everything there is to know about PCs and you should never be afraid to ask for help from your workmates.





## What skills do you need for your job?

You need to be able to manage several different tasks at once. You also need to be able to explain technical issues to clients using plain language, without sounding condescending. There are occasions when clients can be stressed with a situation and you need the ability to remain calm when dealing with angry callers.

## What training have you had?

I am currently studying towards an MCDST certification, which will give me the skills to progress in my job.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I love being in a learning environment, where everyone is willing to help each other. I like talking to clients and helping them resolve their problems. Sometimes the job can be very busy and stressful, but you just have to go with it. Everyone around you is in the same situation, so they all know how you feel.

## What are the main challenges?

It is sometimes difficult giving support over the phone because you don't know if the client is following your instructions properly, or if they are telling you everything they are seeing on their screen. You have to try and make sure they are, without seeming too forceful.



## How do you see your future?

Once I get my MCDST, I hope to further develop my role here. I enjoy working with computers and would like to stay in this field.



### Related jobs

Computer games technical support person  
Computer operator  
Computer service technician  
IT technical sales specialist  
IT trainer  
Telephonist  
Telesales operator



### Salary information

Starting salaries typically range from around £12,000 to £14,000 a year, depending on the size of the company. Experienced staff may earn between £17,000 and £20,000. Top salaries for people with specialist skills may rise to £40,000 a year.



### Getting in

- Most people have some GCSEs/S grades. Computer-related subjects can give you an advantage.
- Other types of courses include NVQs/SVQs in call-handling and technical support.
- Some employers prefer to recruit people with higher-level qualifications like HNCs/HNDs or degrees in subjects such as computing and IT.
- A good telephone manner and communication skills are very important for this type of work.



**Walter Ferrandes** is an installer with The London Satellite Co. Ltd. He sets up aerials and satellite dishes for homes and businesses so that they can receive TV and radio.

## Can you describe your role?

Installing TV systems is an exciting job for anyone who likes to discover the technical side of TV and radio transmissions. Most of the time, it is an outdoor job that involves fixing, aligning and connecting aerials and satellite dishes to a TV.

## What are your main responsibilities?

My main responsibility is to guarantee the delivery of a perfect TV and radio signal so that customers get the best quality reception and picture.

## What is your usual routine?

An installation usually starts with a site survey. This is needed to understand the client's requirements and to assess the kind of components we will need. It is also essential to assess the risk involved – in installing a satellite dish on a roof, for example – and to put in place the safest working practice for the job.

The client then places an order and I go back on a later date to carry out the installation. At the end of the job, the system is tested before being handed over to the client. I need to get the system working in the best possible way for two reasons – to make the client happy and to avoid time consuming call-backs.

# Aerial and satellite installation engineer

**jobs4u** Satellite systems technician



## What hours do you work?

I usually work Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 5.00pm, but it often depends on the customer. Sometimes, for example, customers want the work to be done early in the evening when they get back from work. For an emergency repair call-out, it may be necessary to work on a Saturday or Sunday.

## What is your work environment like?

Clients call or email the office to book an installation or visit, but the installation work is carried out at different locations. There can be a lot of driving between jobs.

## Who do you work with?

As well as working directly with my customers, I have a good network of suppliers to make sure I get the right components, and I'm also supported by admin staff back in the office.

## What skills do you need for your job?

This is an area of fast-developing new technologies, so you need to take courses and get updates regularly. Good communication skills will help you build relationships with new and existing customers. You are also required to work at height, so it is not the kind of job you would choose if you suffer from vertigo!

## What training have you had?

I did a course in radio and TV transmission, but, in this job, what you learn through experience is often more useful than any course you can do.

## What equipment do you use?

I use a van, ladders, drills, testing equipment and a well-equipped tool bag to carry out even the simplest of installations and repairs.



### Walter's route

- Took the equivalent of GCSEs in Italy.
- Training courses with satellite and aerial manufacturers.
- Qualifications from the Confederation of Aerial Industries (CAI).



### Walter's tips

- If you've always been familiar with, and interested in, TV, VCR, radios and electrical components, you should consider this job.
- There is flexibility in the job, as with know-how and a small investment, an installer can become self-employed.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I like my job because it takes me to a different place almost every day, but I don't like it when it rains!

## How do you see your future?

This is a job that will be in demand as new technologies are always becoming available and old ones obsolete, so I can see myself working in this field for a long time.



### Related jobs

Broadcast engineer  
Computer service technician  
Electronic engineering technician  
Electronics engineer  
Signalling technician  
Telecommunications technician



### Salary information

Installers working for a company may start on around £12,000 a year. Experienced installers may earn up to £20,000 a year, or more. Many installers are self-employed. Earnings depend on the amount of business they have and the rates they charge.



### Getting in

- Some companies take on trainee installers. Training will involve on-the-job learning and may include some study at college.
- The Confederation of Aerial Industries (CAI) runs courses covering basic aerial and satellite installations to more complicated systems for tower blocks, hotels and office buildings.
- NVQs in Communication Technologies (Aerial Equipment) are available at Levels 2 and 3.

# Computer service/repair technician

**jobs4u** Computer service technician

**Neil Holloway** is a self-employed IT specialist, whose company, Eideas Ltd, helps people set up and keep their computer equipment running smoothly and efficiently.



## Can you describe your role?

I travel to different customers to help them solve any problems they have with their hardware and software. I set up new equipment for them, repair anything that breaks down and help them make sure the IT they use works for them.

## What are your main responsibilities?

For my job, I have to be an all-rounder when it comes to IT. I might be repairing a printer or taking a laptop apart one day, then setting up a new server or a wireless network the next. The customers vary as much as the type of work; they include schools, businesses and sports clubs.

## What is your daily routine?

My routine is different every day. During the week, I travel to different customers' offices. Some of my work is for other companies who use me as a sub-contractor. Sometimes a project may take a full week and I have to work at the same site until it's completed.

## What hours do you work?

Since schools and businesses run from around 8.30am to 5.30pm, I tend to work these hours as well. However, sometimes IT work needs to be carried out when people are not working on the system. This means occasional after-hours working.

## What is your work environment like?

I have a small office at home, but the bulk of my work can be done anywhere using my laptop. I have worked on the rooftop of a 15-storey building, underneath an international cricket pitch, as well as in schools, colleges and plush offices!

## Who do you work with?

Usually it's just me, but if a job requires another pair of hands, I will employ people I trust to help me out.

## What skills do you need for your job?

You need a huge range of computing skills, as you have to work on many different aspects of computers from software packages to types of hardware.

You also need to be at ease meeting new people, as you will meet lots of different people in this job. The ability to explain to non-technical people what you have done, or why things are not working, is also important.

## What training have you had?

After my A levels and a general business degree at university, I did a three-month sandwich placement at a computer company. Later on, my employers sent me on a couple of training courses that really boosted my knowledge.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I like the flexibility and the variety, but being self-employed means you are responsible for how much money you make, and it isn't a steady income.



### Neil's route

- A levels.
- Business degree.
- Work placement with a computer company.
- Various training courses.
- Set up his own business.



### Neil's tips

- If you like challenges and computers, then I can't recommend becoming an IT professional strongly enough.
- There is a demand for good quality people in the industry and if you are prepared to start at the bottom and learn the ropes, you can very quickly achieve your goals.





# Multimedia designer

jobs4u Multimedia designer

## What are the main challenges?

The biggest challenge is keeping up to speed with new products and software packages so that you are not left behind.

## How do you see your future?

IT is constantly changing and people will always need help with it, so I hope to be able to continue developing my business in this field.

**Andy Watson** is a multimedia designer with Red Paint Multimedia. He helps build the interactive elements and animations that make up websites, CDs and DVDs for clients in different industries.



## Related jobs

Computer games technical support person  
Computer hardware engineer  
Electronic engineering technician  
Technical support person  
Telecommunications technician

## Salary information

Starting salaries for trainee technicians usually range from around £10,000 to £15,000 a year. Experienced technicians may earn around £20,000. The most experienced and qualified technicians or specialists may earn up to £40,000 or more. Self-employed technicians' earnings depend on their hourly or project rates and the amount of work they take on.

## Getting in

- It is possible to start as a trainee without academic qualifications, but most applicants have qualifications such as NVQs/SVQs, City & Guilds, BTEC awards or degrees.
- Many companies offer in-house training on their own products, or may encourage technicians to take part-time courses at college or by distance learning.

## Can you describe your role?

My role involves creating animation or interactive tools for the web or CDs/DVDs. A typical animation starts with a consultation with the client. From that, we build up a good idea of what the client wants. Using this information we then develop a technical specification.

Next, we compile a series of storyboard sketches that show the animation as drawings on paper. Our storyboard and notes are used to create prototypes, which we show the customer for feedback. Using this feedback we complete the scripting and programming, and carry out tests. Once we are happy, we return to the client for final approval and sign-off.

## Andy's route

- Masters Degree in Engineering.
- Developed an online portfolio.
- Professional certification exams for the packages he uses.

## Andy's tip

- Put together an online portfolio of your work. This is a great way of proving to employers that you have what it takes, and gives you an opportunity to experiment with your own projects and ideas.

## What is your daily routine?

A typical day involves a morning review of our current project. I then plan out my day based on tasks and objectives. If I'm working with a colleague, we split the work.

I might spend my day writing a project plan, creating a storyboard, liaising with clients, writing a specification or developing a graphical design. Usually there are informal design meetings with colleagues and occasional telephone calls to clients. Variety is part of the routine and helps make the job exciting.

## What hours do you work?

I typically work from 10.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. Flexible hours are available and I often work extra hours to ensure jobs are completed on time.



**People working in multimedia work across many different types of media – from print to CDs and DVDs, wireless technology and the internet. They may design websites, create CDs or computer games, or even online shopping channels. The four people in this section are experts in web and multimedia applications.**

## Who do you work with?

Depending on the size of the project, I can work alone or with several colleagues. I also work closely with the client at each stage of the project.

## What skills do you need for your job?

Creativity is essential. An eye for graphic design and knowledge of programming are also important in this role. We often have to take a vague idea from a client and turn it into a working model or project. An outgoing personality also helps when dealing with clients. Good time management is also a very important part of the job.

## What tools or equipment do you use?

I work with photo and animation tools on my PC, and I have a graphics tablet for fine drawing connected to the computer.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I love the freedom and creativity involved in my job. I also like dealing with clients, especially when we really impress them with what we've produced.

However, occasionally clients can be difficult to deal with – they can change their minds at any time with little or no regard for the work that's already been done. It can be very disheartening.

## What are the main challenges?

It can be difficult to think of something original and creative on the spot. When I face these challenges, I often chat with a colleague, go for a walk or sleep on the problem. A solution usually presents itself.

## How do you see your future?

As a director, I see my role changing from being hands-on towards a more administrative role.



## Related jobs

Computer games designer  
DTP operator  
Graphic designer  
Internet/Web professional  
Software developer/programmer



## Salary information

Starting salaries typically range from around £16,000 to £18,000 a year. Experienced designers may earn £30,000 a year, or more. Freelance or self-employed designers may charge by the hour or project, and their income depends on their reputation and the amount of work they take on.



## Getting in

- Most multimedia designers have a degree or HNC/HND, but it isn't strictly necessary. Practical experience and a good portfolio count for more.
- Relevant courses include multimedia design, new media or graphic design.
- Skills and experience in using computer packages are important, but many designers learn these on the job.



**Rachel Wickerson** runs her own computer-aided draughting business, E-Draft Solutions. She uses specialised computer-aided design (CAD) software to produce detailed drawings for her clients.

## What does your job involve?

I work for my clients, mainly engineers and architects, to produce computer-aided drawings to support their designs. This can involve meeting a client to discuss what is needed for a job, and working with them on site as the project progresses. Some clients prefer to fax or post design sketches to me and I will then work from my office.

The process of computer-aided design involves building up a drawing by using basic shapes and lines to produce a more complex drawing, such as a layout plan for an office block. You begin by drawing the walls first and building up the plan to include all the details like lights, sockets and sometimes the furniture. The drawings can then be printed or emailed to the client.

## What is your weekly routine?

I can work on one job or ten jobs in a single week, so my routine is quite varied. A typical week might involve working in the office on Monday, spending the next three days on site with the engineers and then being back in the office again on Friday.

# CAD draughter

jobs4u CAD draughtsperson



## What hours do you work?

I usually work from 9.00am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, but being my own boss means I can be more flexible. If I feel like an afternoon off when things are quiet, I can take one. More often than not, though, I can be working long into the evenings and occasionally at the weekends.

## What is your working environment like?

I try to work mainly in the office, but my work can take me to building sites where I might be based in a Portakabin. Site work can be dusty and noisy, but there is a good buzz to it.

## Why did you choose this type of work?

When I finished my GCSEs, I saw a course on building studies and thought it sounded interesting. AutoCAD was part of the course and I found that I really enjoyed doing computer-aided design.

## What training have you done?

After achieving good results in maths, science and English, I enrolled for a BTEC National Diploma in Building Studies. After college, I went to work for a small structural engineering company. This is where I picked up most of my AutoCAD skills.

## Do you use any tools or equipment?

A computer is my tool. I have a PC based in the office and a laptop for site work. I also have a printer that can print large drawings.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I enjoy the challenge and the variety. I also like being my own boss. The downside can be working on site when it's raining or really cold. Although when the weather is nice, you can't beat it.



### Rachel's route

- GCSEs.
- BTEC National Diploma in Building Studies.
- AutoCAD skills while working for a structural engineer.
- Started her own business.



### Rachel's tips

- Enrol on a college course as a foundation, but also get as much work experience as you can.
- You need to be flexible in your approach to this work, as things can change at the last minute and you may need to redo a whole drawing.

## What are the main challenges?

One of the biggest challenges can be time. All too often, I'm working to tight deadlines and sometimes I'm needed in two places at once.

## How do you see your future?

I hope to continue growing the business and to employ more staff. It would be good to do more courses so I can offer additional services to my clients.



### Related jobs

Architectural technician/technologist  
Design engineer  
DTP operator  
Graphic designer  
Product designer



### Salary information

New entrants may start at around £15,000 a year. Senior CAD design draughtspeople can earn up to £40,000. Self-employed or contract CAD draughtspeople may be paid an hourly, daily or project rate.



### Getting in

- GCSEs/S grades (A-C/1-3) in maths, science and technology can be useful for this type of work.
- Many people start with an employer as a technician apprentice.
- Another route is to take a full-time course, such as a BTEC national diploma course or an SQA national certificate in an engineering or construction subject.
- Some people may specialise in CAD draughting after doing a degree or foundation degree.



# Senior web developer

**jobs4u** Internet/Web professional

**Chris Stevens** works for Bluhalo New Media Ltd, and uses HTML coding, Photoshop and other packages to build high-profile websites for business clients.



## Can you describe your role?

At its simplest, I build websites. This involves web coding, project management, work scheduling, bug fixing and mentoring a development team.

## What is your weekly routine?

We handle around ten website builds and the maintenance of over 1,500 websites every week. Any one of our customers could call to report a problem with their site and we need to be capable of fixing the problem quickly and efficiently.



### Chris's route

- A levels.
- Degree in English Literature.
- Web officer for local council.
- HTML and Photoshop.
- Trainee webmaster.
- Various courses in web technologies.



### Chris's tips

- Try to do as many different websites as possible. Potential employers will go straight to your list of URLs when they receive your CV.
- The list of sites you have done in the past will be more impressive to them than any training or qualifications you have.

## What hours do you work?

I work Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 5.30pm. Overtime is available when we are busy.

## What is your work environment like?

I work in a 16th century converted barn in Hampshire. We can dress informally, see horses when we park, and even go for a walk through the fields at lunchtime! During the day we all sit in our team groups in an open plan area and can listen to music while we work.

## Who do you work with?

As head of a team, I work very closely with all the team members and also with the project director, to whom I report. I also work closely with the sales team and the company director. We are also encouraged to build a rapport with our clients.



## What skills do you need for your job?

At its most basic level, knowledge of HTML and Photoshop are all you need to understand web design – you will gain everything else as you progress. It is also vital to understand how a person uses a website and why. In terms of personality, you need to be focused and dedicated. You need to be good under pressure with excellent analytical and problem-solving skills.

Finally, a good web developer is always learning. The internet is a rapidly changing medium with new technologies emerging all the time. I always allow time for personal development with the latest techniques and technologies.

## What training have you had?

I initially learned how to code using HTML by hand rather than using an editor, and this gave me a better grounding for the future in terms of understanding the code behind web pages. I have received training in virtually all of the web technologies – Dreamweaver, Flash, Fireworks, CSS, DHMTL, Javascript, IIS server, ASP, ASP.net, Vbscript and Perl – in my job.

## What do you like/dislike about your job?

I love the variety, especially the freedom and creative control I have over the production of a website. Dealing with clients and helping them achieve their goals is very rewarding. However, I do get the occasional difficult client, but so does everyone. Working in front of a PC all day can also affect your eyesight after a while, so I make sure I get regular eye tests.

## What are the main challenges?

The main challenge occurs when a client asks for something to be done on their website and your immediate thought is, 'I don't know how I'm going to do that!' You always need to be coming up with new solutions.



### How do you see your future?

Ideally, I would like to see my team grow and become the best and most envied in the country. I want to continue to work on high-profile websites.



### Related jobs

Computer games designer  
Graphic designer  
IT product developer  
Multimedia designer  
Software developer/programmer



### Salary information

New entrants may start on around £17,000 a year. Experienced web developers may earn £30,000 or more. Senior developers, or those with specialist knowledge, may earn up to £40,000 a year, or more.



### Getting in

- A portfolio of websites you have developed is more important to most employers than qualifications.
- Most web developers, however, have a degree, HNC or HND. This might be in web development, web design, multimedia design, web content management or programming. Qualifications in design subjects are also relevant.
- Some employers recruit people with A levels, or equivalent qualifications, as trainees.



# Computer games tester

jobs4u

Computer games technical support person

**Elaine Green** works for ZOO Digital Publishing in Sheffield, and has the job of testing new computer games. But it's not all play and no work, as she explains...



### Can you describe your role?

I test games to locate any faults or bugs in the programmes, and then write reports on the tests I've done and what faults I've found. It is my responsibility to ensure that the games we produce leave with no errors – from minor errors such as spelling mistakes, to major errors such as crashes.

I spend most of my time working on the computer, compiling test reports or planning future tests. Often I have to go back and do re-tests to try to narrow down the cause. This often involves playing one area of a game repeatedly to establish exactly what has caused the problem.

### What is your typical routine?

A typical project runs for six months and quality assurance (QA) is involved from start to finish. Initially, I discuss with the programmers what they think will need testing, generate test dates and plan the length of the testing period.

### What hours do you work?

Regular office hours are 9.00am to 5.30pm, with a one-hour lunch break. This is reasonably flexible depending on which projects are in QA. We are at our busiest during the summer months as all projects that are released for Christmas have to be completed by October. During this period overtime is often required.

### Who do you work with?

I am part of a team of three – the product services team. We supply all the content for the games, such as pictures and video clips, and also provide QA (checking all the games). I work directly with the producers of each game and also the programmers and creative team. I am also in contact with our external testing teams, and I have a number of temporary staff who work on an ad-hoc basis to do testing for us.



### Elaine's route

- A levels.
- Part-time evening courses in computer programming.
- Current post.



### Elaine's tips

- This job isn't about playing your favourite game all day, every day. You will have to play some terrible games that are liable to crash repeatedly.
- Any language skills you can gain are a bonus because most games are now translated into European languages.



### What skills do you need for your job?

You need a really good grasp of computers. You also need to be organised, methodical and able to do something repeatedly without switching off. Command of the English language is also important, and other languages are a bonus. Finally, you need to be able to take criticism. If a bug is missed, it will be your fault and questions will be asked.

### Why did you choose this type of work?

I wanted to be a computer programmer, but I am a gamer at heart and it seemed ideal for me to spend my day doing the thing I love the most.

### What training have you had?

I have completed a couple of part-time evening courses in computer programming.

### What do you like/dislike about your job?

I like knowing I've been part of something that other people play for their enjoyment, and knowing that I've helped make that product better. I dislike missing bugs.



### What are the main challenges?

Our business moves very quickly, and keeping track of everything that is happening now, as well as what is planned for the future, can be hard.

### How do you see your future?

I will be staying in the testing role for a while yet, but hope eventually to move up to a more managerial position, where I will do less of the actual testing.



#### Related jobs

Computer games designer  
Internet/Web professional  
IT product developer  
Multimedia designer  
Software developer/programmer



#### Salary information

Starting salaries are likely to range from around £15,000 to £19,000 a year, depending on the size of the company. Experienced testers may earn up to £24,000 a year, or more. Many testers progress into games design or management.



#### Getting in

- There are no specific qualifications, but some programming knowledge or experience is desirable, and a good standard of English (both written and verbal) is required.
- Qualifications in subjects such as programming, multimedia or computer graphics are useful.
- Games testers must be avid games players. They must be able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the industry, including the different platforms and games available on the market.
- Ability with computers is a must, including the use of spreadsheets and database packages.

## Further reading

(Some may be priced)

Careers and Jobs in IT – Kogan Page  
Careers in IT leaflets – British Computer Society  
Guide to Careers in IT – Hobsons  
Opportunities in Technical Sales Careers – McGraw Hill  
Technical Editing – Prentice Hall

### Magazines/journals:

3D World  
Communicator  
Computer Arts  
Computer Weekly  
Computing  
IT Training  
Macworld  
.net magazine  
Network Computing  
PC Pro  
Web Designer  
What Satellite and Digital TV

### Websites:

- [www.comptia.org](http://www.comptia.org) – The Computer Technology Industry Association
- [www.computerweekly.com](http://www.computerweekly.com)
- [www.igda.org](http://www.igda.org) – International Game Developers Association
- [www.insidecareers.co.uk/it](http://www.insidecareers.co.uk/it)
- [www.itjobspost.com](http://www.itjobspost.com)
- [www.wic.org.uk](http://www.wic.org.uk) – Women into Computing
- [www.womeningames.com](http://www.womeningames.com)

For further details on careers look on the Connexions jobs4u website:

• [www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u)





## Useful addresses

### General IT

#### British Computer Society (BCS)

1 Sanford Street  
Swindon  
Wiltshire SN1 1HJ  
☎ 01793 417417 or  
☎ 0845 300 4417  
🌐 [www.bcs.org.uk](http://www.bcs.org.uk)

#### e-skills UK

1 Castle Lane  
London SW1E 6DR  
☎ 020 7963 8920  
🌐 [www.e-skills.com](http://www.e-skills.com)

#### Institute for the Management of Information Systems (IMIS)

5 Kingfisher House  
New Mill Road  
Orpington BR5 3QG  
☎ 0700 002 3456  
🌐 [www.imis.org.uk](http://www.imis.org.uk)

#### The Institution of Analysts and Programmers

Charles House  
36 Culmington Road  
London W13 9NH  
☎ 020 8567 2118  
🌐 [www.iap.org.uk](http://www.iap.org.uk)

#### The National Computing Centre Limited (NCC)

Oxford House  
Oxford Road  
Manchester M1 7ED  
☎ 0161 228 6333  
🌐 [www.ncc.co.uk](http://www.ncc.co.uk)

### Aerial and satellite installation

#### Confederation of Aerial Industries Limited (CAI)

Fulton House  
Fulton Road  
Wembley  
Middlesex HA9 0TF  
☎ 020 8902 8998  
🌐 [www.cai.org.uk](http://www.cai.org.uk)

### Computer service/repairs

#### The Engineering Careers Information Service (ECIS)

14 Upton Road  
Watford WD18 0JT  
☎ 0800 282167  
🌐 [www.engineuity.org.uk](http://www.engineuity.org.uk) or  
🌐 [www.semta.org.uk](http://www.semta.org.uk)

### IT sales

#### The Institute of Sales & Marketing Management (ISMM)

Harrier Court  
Lower Woodside  
Luton LU1 4DQ  
☎ 01582 840001  
🌐 [www.ismm.co.uk](http://www.ismm.co.uk)

### IT training and support

#### Help Desk Institute (HDI)

21 High Street  
Green Street Green  
Orpington  
Kent BR6 6BG  
☎ 01689 889 100  
🌐 [www.hdi-europe.com](http://www.hdi-europe.com)

#### Institute of IT Training

Westwood House  
Westwood Business Park  
Coventry CV4 8HS  
☎ 0845 006 8858  
🌐 [www.iitt.org.uk](http://www.iitt.org.uk)

### Multimedia

#### British Interactive Media Association (BIMA)

Briarlea House  
Southend Road  
South Green  
Billericay CM11 2PR  
☎ 01277 658107  
🌐 [www.bima.co.uk](http://www.bima.co.uk)

#### Skillset

Prospect House  
80-110 New Oxford Street  
London WC1A 1HB  
☎ 0808 030 0900  
(England, Wales, N. Ireland);  
☎ 0808 100 8094  
(Scotland)  
🌐 [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)



### Usability and Accessibility Working Group (UA-WG)

C/O The British Marketing and Web Design Association  
PO Box 3227  
London NW9 9LX  
🌐 [www.ua-wg.com](http://www.ua-wg.com)

### Technical writing

#### Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC)

PO Box 522  
Peterborough PE2 5WX  
☎ 01733 390141  
🌐 [www.istc.org.uk](http://www.istc.org.uk)

**Working in computers & IT** was researched and written by Rebecca Dearden. With thanks to all interviewees and consultant organisations.

### Apprenticeships

Apprentices learn on the job, building up knowledge and skills, gaining qualifications and earning money all at the same time. It is important to bear in mind that pay rates for Apprenticeships do vary from area to area and between industry sectors.

There are different levels of Apprenticeship available, but they all lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Key Skills qualifications and, in most cases, a technical certificate such as Edexcel, BTEC or City & Guilds, in subjects such as Business, Design, IT, Media & Printing, Public Services, Sport, Sport & Exercise Science, and Travel & Tourism.

There are different arrangements for Apprenticeships in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Check out more details at

- 🌐 [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) (England)
- 🌐 [www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk) (Scotland)
- 🌐 [www.careers-wales.com](http://www.careers-wales.com) (Wales)
- 🌐 [www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk) (Northern Ireland)

Other jobs which may interest you in computers and IT can be found at  
[www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u)  
 They include:

Computer games designer  
 Computer operator  
 IT product developer

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