How to Become a Teen Hacker

The term 'hacker' is glamorous, and has been influenced a lot by popular media. In reality, a hacker is just a person looking for vulnerabilities that can be explored and exploited. Most real hackers hack systems out of curiosity and...

Part 1 of 4:

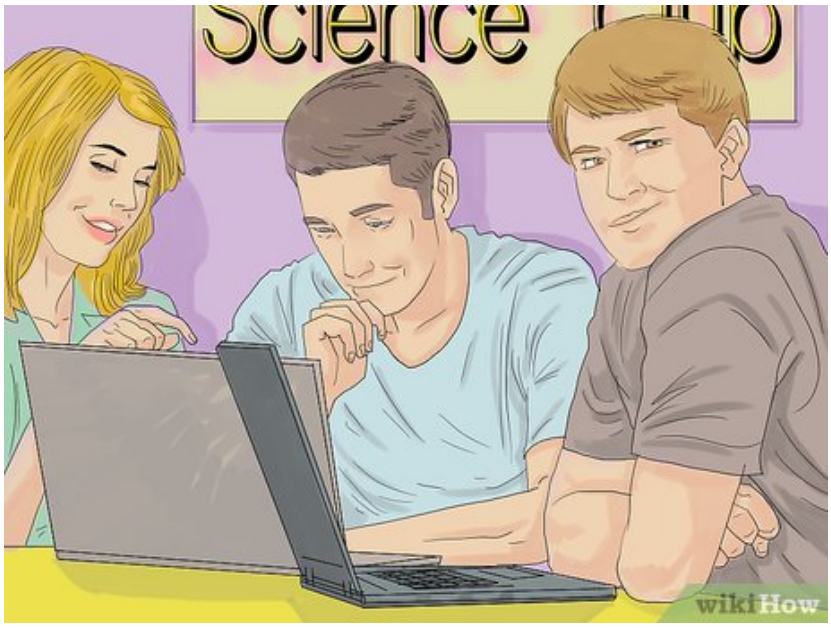
Taking Classes

1. 

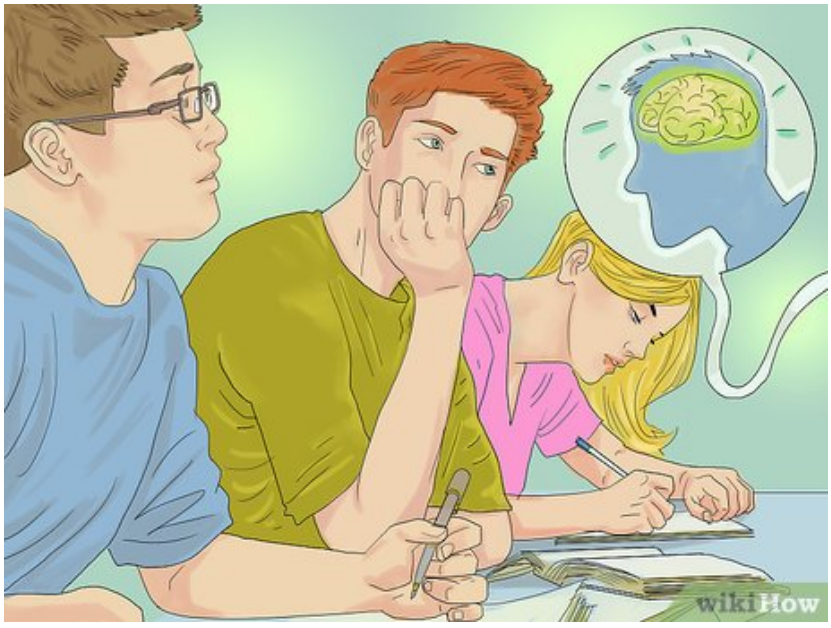
Sign up for computer science classes at school. Many high schools offer computer science programs that can teach you the basics of programming and networking. Taking these classes while they're free to you can help a lot in the future, and give you a leg up in your personal studies. Talk to your counselor to see if there's a computer science path you can take for your electives.

2. 

Check local community centers and community colleges for courses. Focus on operating systems and networking. You may be able to find many more programs than you would at your high school, but these will likely cost some money to take. These courses may offer you access to more highly-trained professionals than you would find at school.

3. 

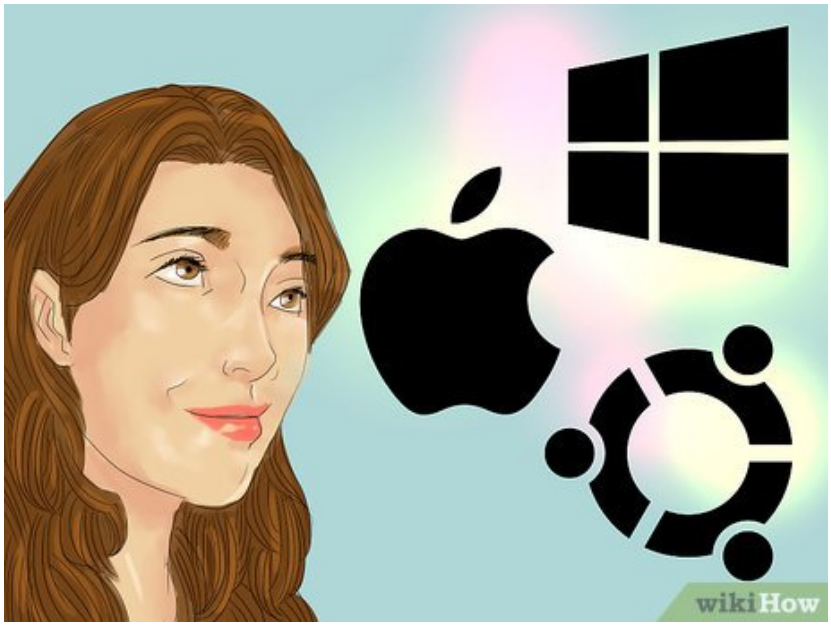
Join a computer science club at school. This is a great way to meet like-minded people as well as potentially get more one-on-one time with the computer science teacher. If you don't have a computer science club, consider forming one yourself. These things look good on college resumes as well, where you can learn a lot more about applied computer science.

4. 

Take logic and critical thinking courses. Hacking is more than just knowing programming languages. You have to be able to approach problems from unique angles and exploit vulnerabilities that the creator would never think of. Knowing how to apply creativity to attack problems can give you a big advantage. [1]

Part 2 of 4:

Learning Computers and Networking

1. 

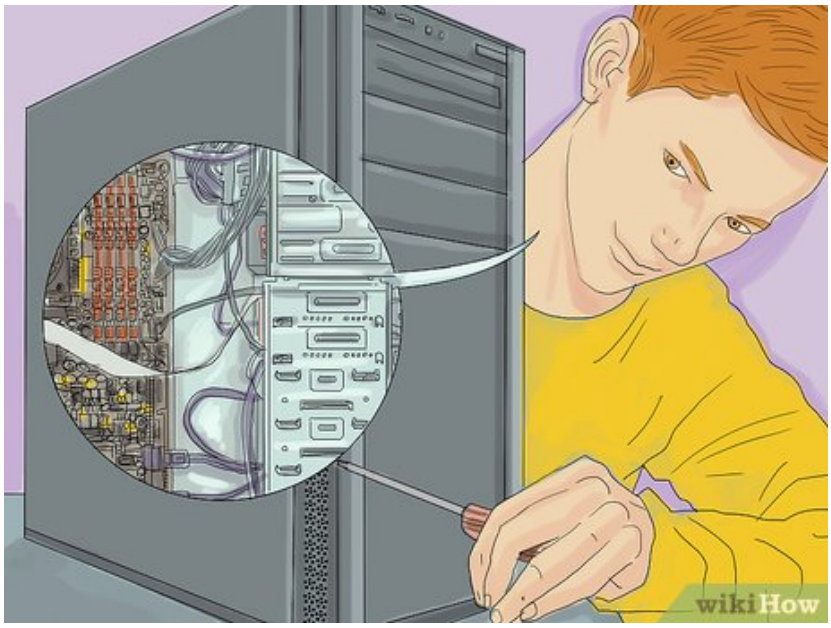
Learn the ins and outs of major operating systems. Use your school's computer labs to learn the layout and flow of as many operating systems as possible. To be a successful hacker, you'll need to be comfortable working in Windows, Linux, and OS X. You should be able to perform any major function

and find any location without having to think about it.

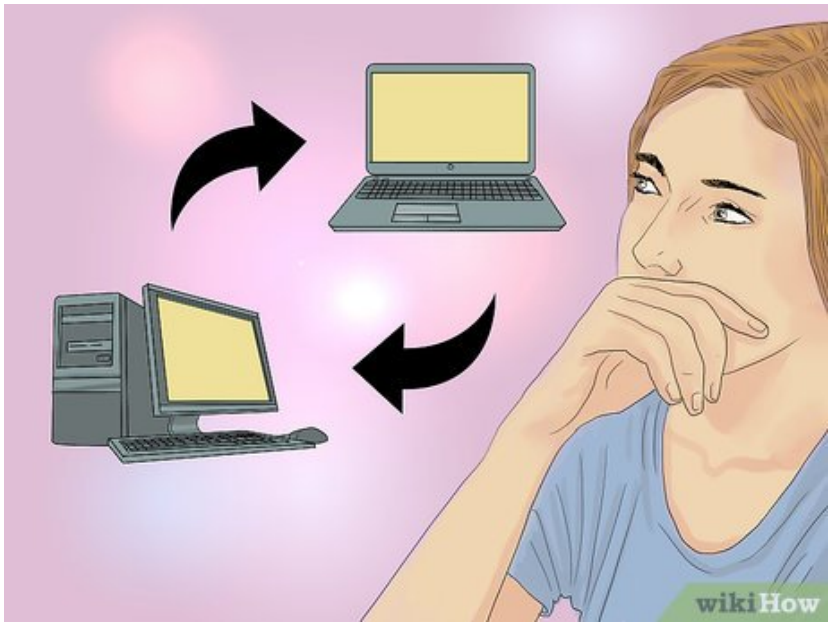
2. 

Get familiar with command lines. A lot of time hacking is spent looking at a command line and typing commands. Get acquainted with the Windows Command Prompt and the Terminal for Linux and OS X.

1. See How to Use CMD for more information on the Windows Command Prompt.
2. See How to Get Familiar with Ubuntu Commands for details on the Ubuntu (Linux) terminal.

3. 

Learn how computer components work together. A lot of advanced hacking will occur at the hardware level as you interact with network cards, routers, and memory. Knowing the basics of how a computer works and how components connect to each other will help as you learn to take advantage of systems. See How to Build a Computer to get an understanding of how it all works together. You can gain a lot of basic computer knowledge from taking computer classes at school.

4. 

Learn the basics of networking. Knowing how data is transferred over the internet is essential to be a successful hacker. Learn how the different layers of network models operate. This will teach you where data can be found and how to intercept and change it. See How to Understand Computer Networking for a rundown on network models and layers. Basic networking knowledge is critical for effective, high-level hacking.

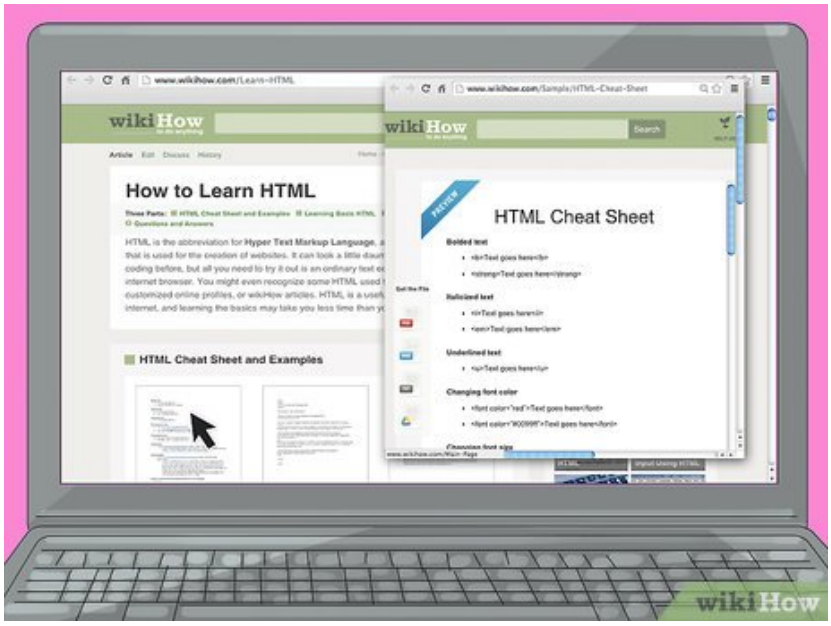
1. You may be able to take classes on networking at your school or local community college.

5. 

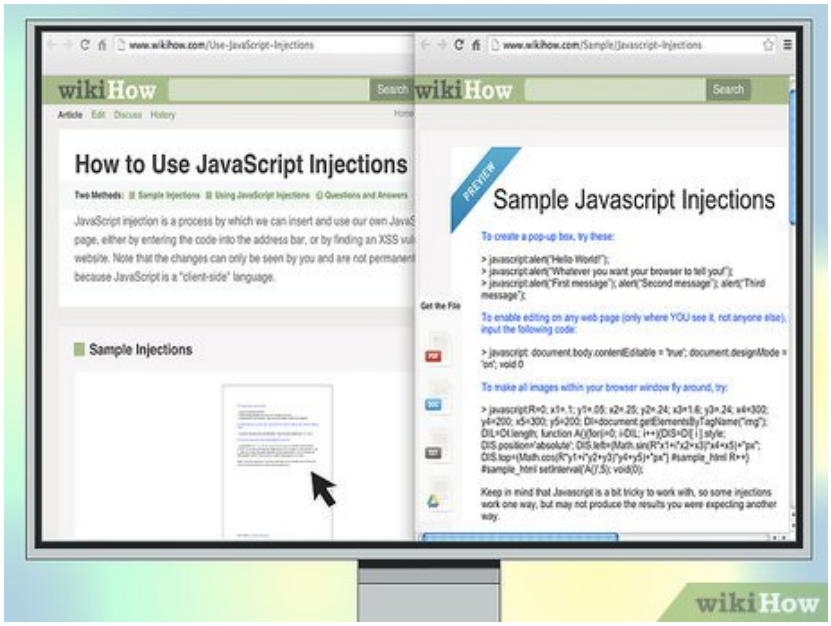
Read every book on hacking and computers that you can. Don't just learn from your classes. You should be actively engaging in learning as much as possible. Pick up some old used books on hacking, or sign up for a quarterly publication. Any and all information that you can consume will help increase your hacking knowledge.

Part 3 of 4:

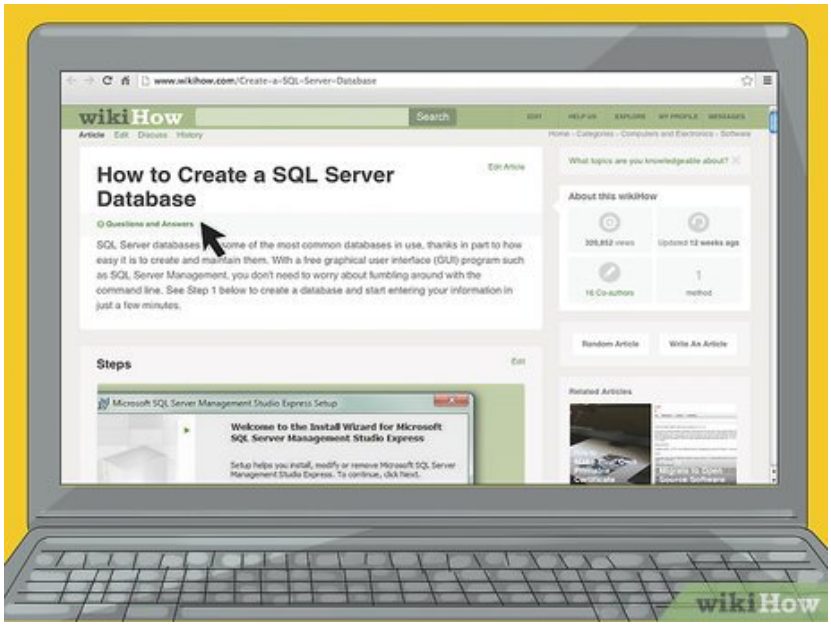
Learning Basic Languages

1. 

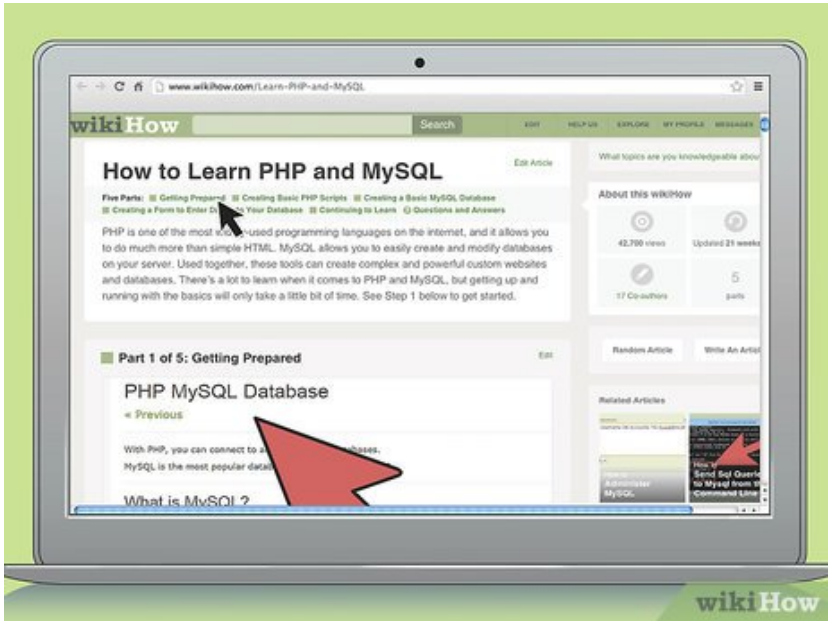
Learn HTML. HTML is the basic language that all web pages are made with. Knowing HTML basics can help you identify weaknesses in websites, as well as code your own basic sites. See How to Learn HTML to get started.

2. 

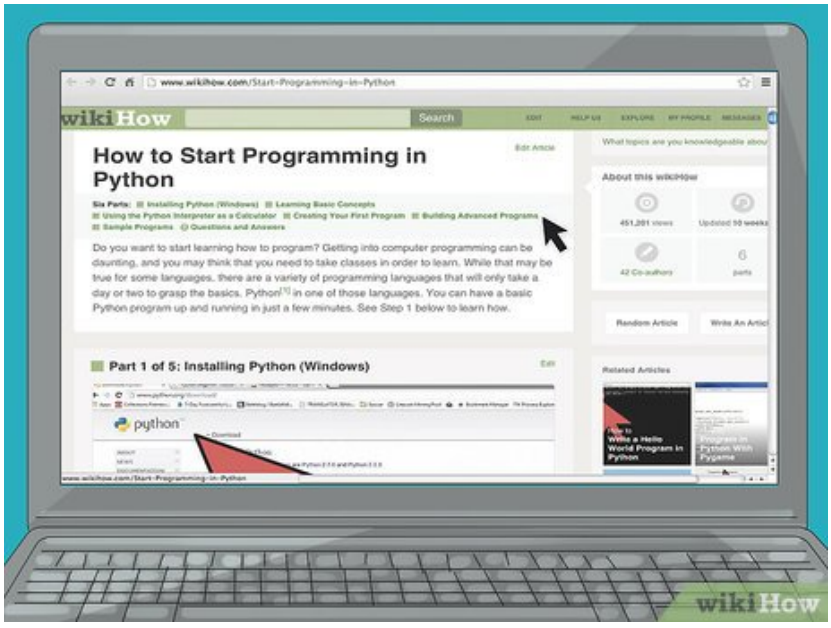
Learn JavaScript. JavaScript is one of the main ways that content is displayed on websites. Learning how JavaScript works can help you identify exploitable parts of websites and inject your own scripts. See How to Use JavaScript Injections for a look at how injections work.

3. 

Learn SQL. SQL is the main database language for websites and online services. Hackers spend a lot of time attempting to access databases, so knowing how SQL works is essential for most hacking. See How to Create a SQL Server Database for information on setting up an SQL server to test.

4. 

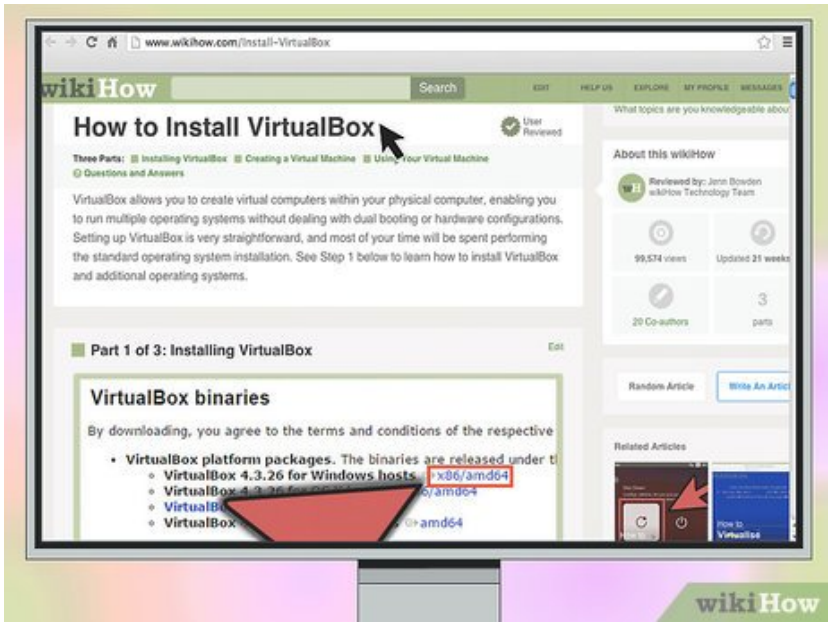
Learn PHP. PHP is a server-side language, and is often used to handle secure logins. This makes knowing PHP essential for hacking secure sites. See How to Learn PHP and MySQL for details on getting started with PHP. This is one of the most essential languages for hackers.

5. 

Learn Python. Python is a high-level language that allows you to quickly write programs and scripts. It is essential for writing your own exploits and hacks. See How to Start Programming in Python for tips on getting started.

Part 4 of 4:

Practicing Hacking Safely

1. 

Hack a virtual machine on your own network. The safest way to practice hacking is to hack your own equipment. Setting up a private network with virtual machines will allow you to test and deploy hacks without causing any actual damage or landing yourself in trouble with the law.

1. You can use virtual machines to install any operating system on your computer. This will allow you to test hacks tailored to specific operating systems. See How to Install VirtualBox for information on getting started with virtual machines for free.

2. 

Use hacking practice sites. If you want to try your hacking skills in the real world, there are several sites available with built-in vulnerabilities that are perfectly legal to hack. These sites will let you practice your scripts and attack methods without any fear of legal repercussion. Popular practice sites include:[2]

1. Bricks
2. bWAPP
3. DVWA
4. Google Gruyere
5. McAfee HackMe sites

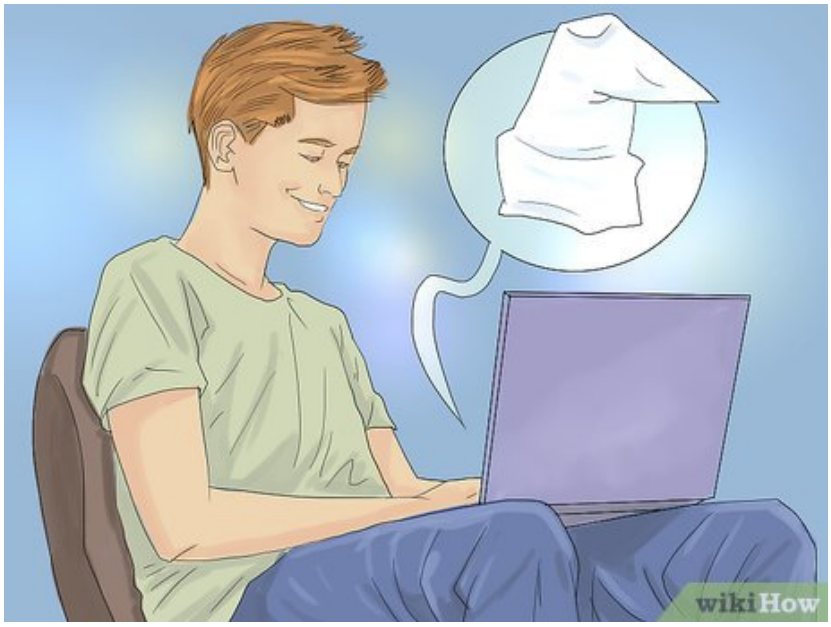
3. 

Join some hacking communities. There are a variety of hacking communities out there, from easy-to-find forums to incredibly hidden enclaves. Find a group of hackers who can challenge you to become a better hacker and help you when you are stumped. Hacking communities may also provide resources for practicing hacking techniques safely.

4. 

Avoid any illegal behavior. Regardless of how tempting it may be, don't start doing illegal things with your new hacking knowledge. A single bad hack can land you in trouble with the law, potentially halting your hacking career before it even starts. Don't be fooled by the stories of professional hackers becoming trusted employees after being caught; far more often hackers simply go to jail.

1. Avoid being associated with illegal behavior as well. if your hacking community starts performing attacks, you can be considered guilty by association. If you become uncomfortable with the actions of others, distance yourself as much as possible.

5. 

Practice "white hat" or "ethical" hacking. These terms are used to describe hackers who look for vulnerabilities in systems but do not exploit them for their own gain. Instead, white hat hackers will report these vulnerabilities to prevent future attacks from malicious hackers. Skilled white hat hackers can earn lots of money in the security industry.