

How to Get a Degree in Information Technology

A degree in Information Technology (IT) can open doors to high-paying jobs that are expected to grow into the 2020s.<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/home.htm> As the world becomes more automated, companies and...

Part 1 of 3:

Acquiring Your Pre-College Fundamentals

1.



Graduate from high school. If you didn't graduate, get your equivalency diploma. Most postsecondary programs require one or the other. Those that don't require a diploma usually can't guarantee financial aid for remedial courses.^[2]

1. If you're still in high school, take as many IT electives as you can. Talk to your guidance counsellor to see if you can receive college credit for any of them.

2.



Get certified. This is a great way to sharpen your skills and gain experience that will help you in a degree program. Choose from specific areas like Microsoft, Cisco, or Information Systems Security. Sign up for classes at your local community college or through online programs.^[3]

3.



Obtain practical experience, if possible. Work at a help desk or as an intern. Volunteer your computer talents with groups that can't afford paid staff. This will give you practice and help you begin to build a professional network. Some degree programs will even allow you to turn your experience into credit hours.^[4]

Part 2 of 3:

Getting into a Degree Program

1.



Choose the degree you want to pursue. Study for a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) to qualify for most careers in IT. If a four-year program isn't for you, look into an associate degree. This will allow you to work as a web developer or in a help desk setting.^[5]

2.



Research schools and programs. Look into the reputation of each school. Compare and contrast admissions requirements such as minimum high school GPA and standardized test scores. Pay attention to the number of credit hours you'll need in order to graduate. For one-stop research, check out the listings of the best U.S. schools from *US News and World Report*.^[6]

1. *U.S. News* also has a page of the best global universities for prospective students outside the U.S.^[7]

3.



Look for online degree programs, if necessary. This is a good idea if you have a hectic schedule that leaves little time for in-person classes. Look into whether the school requires you to take a certain number of classes on campus.^[8] Expect to pay a bit more for online classes at some schools. You should also be prepared to pay higher tuition if you live out of state.^[9]

4.



Take standardized tests, if necessary. Many U.S. schools require scores from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT). If you've previously taken the test, check with your prospective schools if you have to retest. Some programs require math scores no more than two years old.^[10] Download the study guides online and aim for the scores required from the schools you're considering.^[11]

1. If you plan to attend school outside the U.S., look into which standardized admissions tests you might have to take for college or university admission.

5.



Apply to several colleges with IT programs. Some schools can be very picky in their admissions. Therefore, you should apply to more than one. Choose at least three to five that fit your budget.^[12]

6.



Apply for financial aid. Look into scholarships that your prospective schools offer. If you live in the U.S., complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for the Pell Grant, federal student loans, and federal work-study opportunities.^[13] Finally, it also helps to search for private-sector aid available through non-profits and corporations.^[14]

1. If you're a U.S. citizen attending school outside the country, it might be difficult to find financial aid.
2. If you live outside the U.S. in a country whose universities charge tuition fees, check with your local or national government for financial aid opportunities.

7.



Accept an admission offer. If you get more than one acceptance letter, weigh your decision carefully. Visit the campuses if you live close to them. If that's not possible, consider which school offers you the best financial aid package and fastest time to graduation.^[15]

Part 3 of 3:

Satisfying Academic Requirements

1.



Enroll in remedial classes, if necessary. If your score on any part of the SAT or ACT was below average, you might be required to take remedial courses in Math, Science, or Writing. Get these courses out of the way in your first semester, if possible. You'll have to complete them to enroll in most of courses that count toward your degree.^[16]

2.



Take the required classes to earn your degree. The requirements will depend on your school, the degree you are pursuing (Associate or Bachelor's), and whether you decide to specialize in a specific aspect of IT. Prepare for IT-specific courses such as programming, computer graphics, and network fundamentals. Expect to take general education courses in addition to your computer classes.^[17]

1. Examples of general education classes include English, History, Humanities, and Science.

3.



Study any areas of specialization that interest you. Build on your certificate, if you have one, or study another specialization to expand your expertise. These might include Information Security, Systems Administration, or Software Development. Most degree programs will have advanced classes available in these and other areas.^[18]

4.



Work closely with your academic adviser. Touch base with them at least once per semester to plan your future classes, discuss your current academic standing, and talk about career goals. If you're struggling in any of your classes, schedule a meeting with your adviser and professor(s) to discuss the best course of action.^[19]

5.



Pursue an advanced degree, if necessary. Try to make this decision during your first two years of undergraduate study. If an advanced degree appeals to you, start researching graduate programs at your school and at other schools. Look into admission requirements and make plans to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) at the beginning of your senior year.^[20]

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