

# How to Start a Cyber Security Career

Cyber security is grounded in information technology (IT), and many jobs and lucrative careers within cyber security deal with blocking cyber-attacks and protecting companies' online data.<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurencebradford/201...>

Part 1 of 3:

## Gaining Education and Training

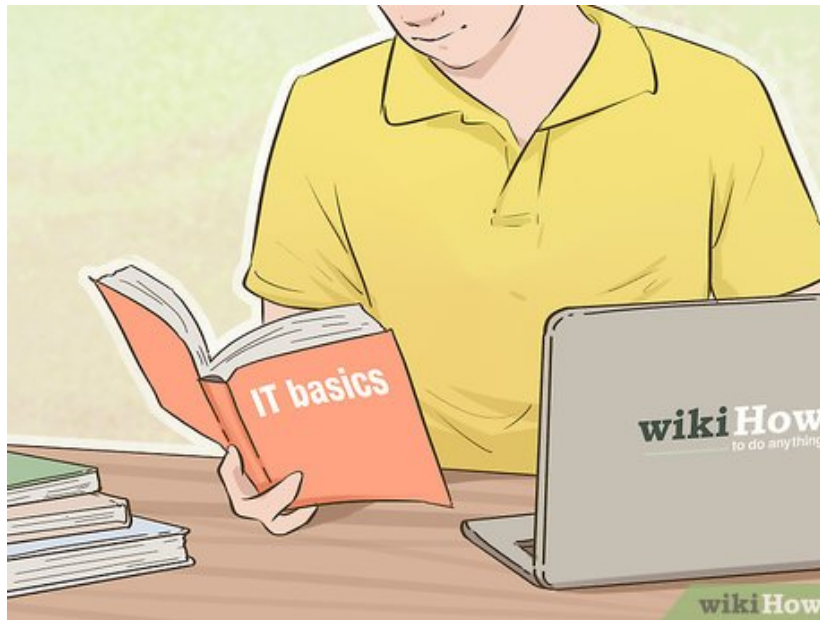
1.



**Earn a BS degree in IT or computer sciences if you're a student.** The majority of people who work in cyber security earned their BS in 1 of these 2 fields. Many employers expect to hire highly-educated professionals for cyber security so, in most cases, a college degree is a must.<sup>[2]</sup> For higher-level management positions, employers may even expect their prospective employees to have a master's degree in 1 of these fields.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. If you already have an undergrad degree in a different field, or if college isn't a viable option for you, try taking a few courses in cyber security instead.
2. Or, if you'd rather pay for online courses specifically geared towards cyber security, check out the course offerings at: <https://www.concise-courses.com/how-to-start-your-career/>.

2.



**Study IT basics to master cyber security skills if you already have a BS.** Cyber security is built upon the IT field, so some basic training in IT will help you understand how to build and manage online systems and data repositories. IT training will go a long way to help prepare you for an engineering-focused job in cyber security. If it's been a few years since you graduated—or if you're a college or high school student studying something other than IT or computer sciences—take a course in IT.<sup>[4]</sup>

1. Or, enroll in a nearby technical or community college for a single IT course.
2. If you're not inclined to go back to school, there are many good online IT courses. Find some free online course offerings at: <https://www.edx.org/>.

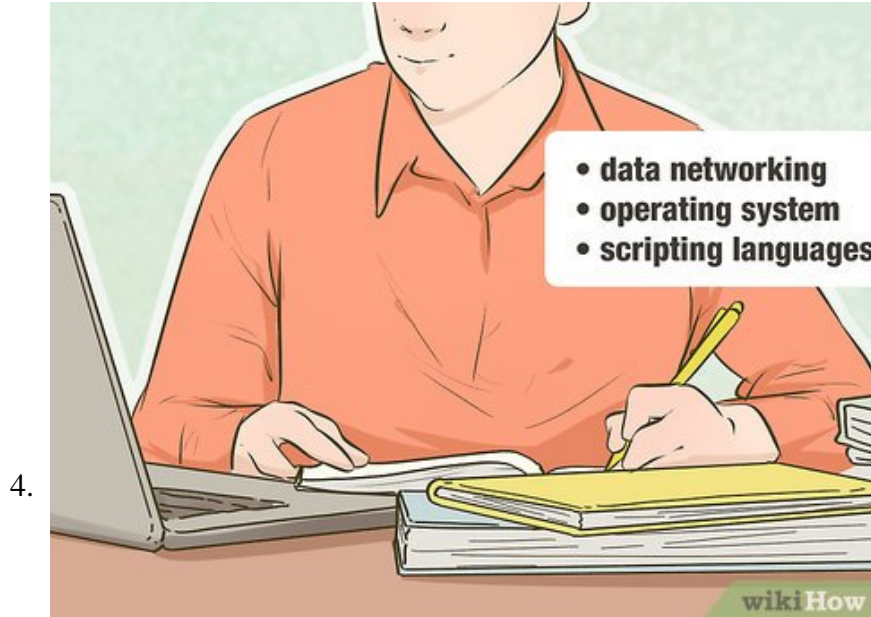
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**Earn 1 or 2 cyber security certificates if you don't have an IT BS.** A certificate is a great way to show prospective employers that you're highly qualified within the IT and cyber security fields. Certificates also demonstrate that you have experience working with security and IT systems. While you won't be hired into an executive position with a certificate, it'll help to get you into an entry-level position, from which

you can work your way up. Check out reputable and well-known options like:[5]

1. The Certified Information Security Manager (CISM) certification.
2. The Global Information Assurance Certification (GIAC) certification.
3. The Security+ Certification. Find out more online at:  
<https://certification.comptia.org/certifications/security>.
4. The Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSPY). Visit their website at:  
<https://www.isc2.org/Certifications/CISSP>.



**Develop a second area of specialization in addition to security.** Companies hiring in cyber security want individuals with well-rounded IT and tech skills. Make yourself more marketable by developing knowledge in a related field. You can do this through taking college-level courses at your undergrad institution or a local technical or community college. Or, if you already work in the tech industry, ask your supervisor for assignments in an area related to cyber security. For example, specialize in a secondary field like:[6]

1. Data networks
2. Administering several operating systems
3. Multiple scripting languages (e.g., Python and Bash)

Part 2 of 3:

## Marketing Yourself and Networking

1.



**Network with other professionals in the field for job connections.** Often, getting a job in cyber security—as in most other fields—comes down to who you know. While some networking can be done online, it's also crucial to network in person. Attend cyber security conferences or job conventions, and speak with as many peers and potential employers as you can. Be prepared to introduce yourself to security professionals and ask for any tips they may have about finding a cyber security career.<sup>[7]</sup>

1. Also try getting involved in some open-source work or community projects. While you won't be paid for this labor, it's a valuable way to network.

2.



**Volunteer your time to work with an online cyber security organization.** There are quite a few online groups that help spread information about cyber security to local communities. Volunteering in this capacity will look great on your resume! It'll also put you in touch with cyber-security professionals who can direct you to potential job openings. Check out online organizations like:<sup>[8]</sup>

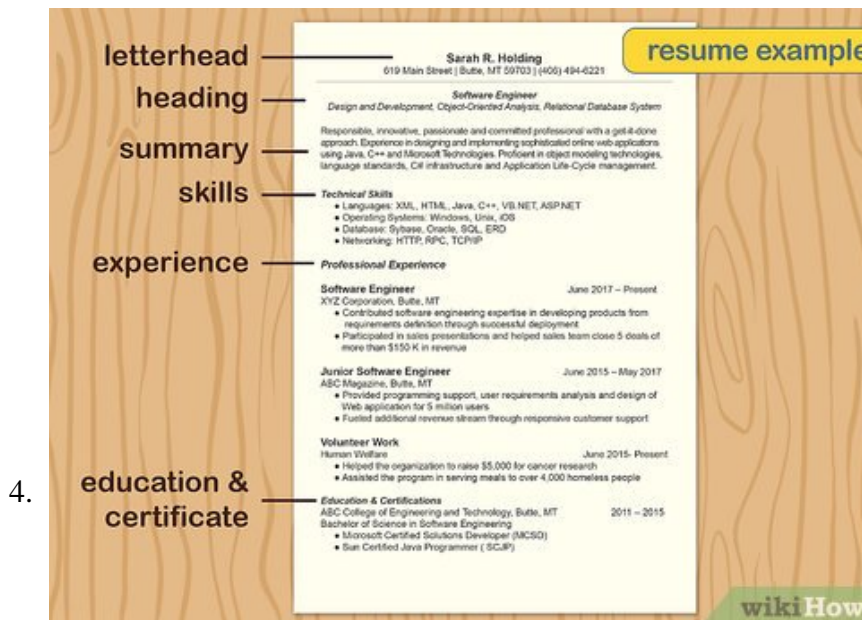
1. The Information Systems Security Association (ISSA)

## 2. The San Diego Cyber Security Center of Excellence



**Run multiple systems on your own time to hone your skills.** Not only will running multiple personal systems keep your cyber-security skills sharp, but it will also show to potential employers that you're self-directed and interested in hands-on learning. Managing multiple systems—or even participating in open-source projects—in your own time can hone skills like tracking malicious online activities reverse engineering malware.<sup>[9]</sup>

1. It's very common for interviewers to ask something like, 'You must have a home lab; tell me about what kinds of systems you're currently running?' They'll then follow up with, 'So, what do you think you've learned from your experience?'



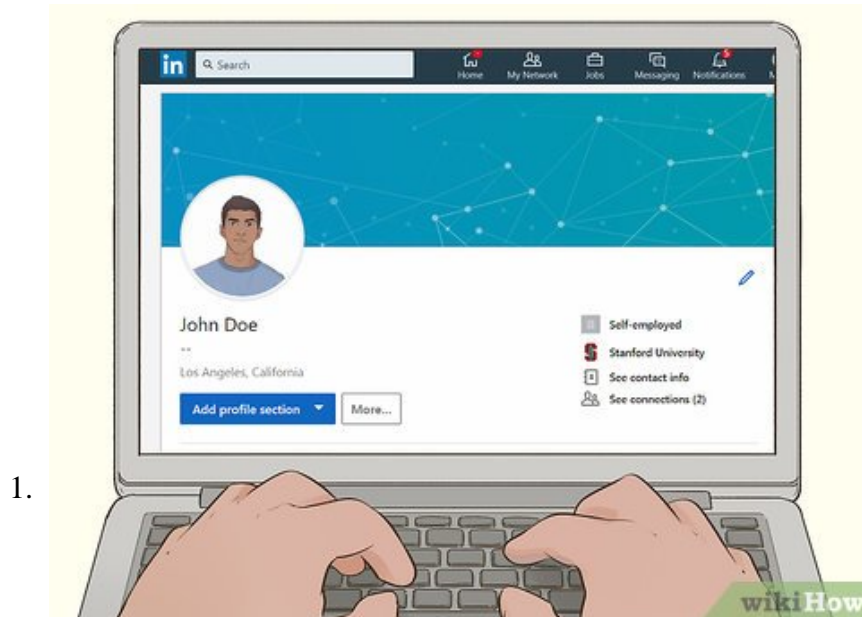
**Prepare a resume to highlight your cyber-security experience.** You'll use this document to apply to prospective jobs that, ideally, will lead to a career in cyber security. Lead with your education, and highlight any training you have in IT, coding, or another cyber-security-adjacent field. Then briefly sum

up your experience in the field. Keep the resume brief and chronological.

1. When you're formatting your resume, restrict it to 1 full page. If parts of your resume spill over onto the second page, you'll need to find a way to cut the length of the document.

Part 3 of 3:

## Finding a Cyber Security Job



**Create a LinkedIn profile to network with professionals in the field.** Fill out every field in the bio, upload a picture as well as your resume, and in general try to make your profile look as complete and professional as possible. Then, use the website's search features to search for IT and cyber security jobs in your area.

1. Start creating your profile, networking with people in the cyber security field, and applying for jobs online at: <https://www.linkedin.com/>.

2.



**Look online for cyber security jobs that you are qualified for.** Since cyber security is inherently concerned about online threats, the majority of jobs in the field are advertised online. So, check out big online job websites. Type something like 'cyber security job' into the search bar, and set the 'Location' option to your current city. Other great websites to peruse as you look for online job postings include:

1. Monster.com
2. Indeed.com

3.



**Start your job search by looking for an entry-point tech job.** It's easy to get your hopes up and imagine that your first cyber-security job will be high-profile. Most cyber-security careers, though, are built over decades and employers will expect you to start in relatively low-level positions. That's not a bad thing, though! As long as a position relates to cyber security in some way, it'll build your skills, look great on a resume, and position you to move up to a better job.<sup>[10]</sup>

1. Even if you find yourself in an entry-level IT job punching tickets, you can gain valuable experience from this position.



4.

**Demonstrate a dedication to continued learning and development in the interview.** Employers who are hiring cyber security personnel will want to see that you have more than a surface-level interest in reading and learning more about the field. So, talk about areas related to IT and cyber security about which you have some intellectual curiosity. Cyber security is a field that evolves quickly, and professionals need to be able to learn new ways to block cyber-attacks.<sup>[11]</sup>

1. For example, in the interview, you could explain that you're interested in learning more about blocking cloud-based cyber-attacks (or any other developing part of the field).
2. You can also name-drop some influential tech gurus (even cyber security pros on Twitter!) who you regularly read and learn from.
3. Or, talk about an aspect of your current job that you're interested in delving deeper into.

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