**What Does a Computer Technologist Do?**

Computer technologists, also known as computer technicians or computer user support specialists, provide technical support while maintaining computer systems in their place of employment. They listen to customers who need computer assistance to diagnose an issue. Computer technologists help customers on how to fix the issues with their computers. In addition, they set up and fix equipment. They also help customers learn to use different pieces of equipment such as printers, software and email.

The table below outlines the general requirements for a career as a computer technologist.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Education Required** | High school diploma; associate's or bachelor's degree recommended |
| **Education Field of Study** | Computer science, computer networking, computer programming, information systems |
| **Key Responsibilities** | Offer technical support, maintain computer systems, upgrade servers, workstations and other computer systems, keep accurate records of computer systems problems and the steps taken to solve them |
| **Job Growth (2014-2024)** | 13% (for all computer user support specialists)\* |
| **Median Salary (2015)** | $48,620 (for all computer user support specialists)\* |

*Source: \*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**What Is a Computer Technologist?**

A computer technologist is also referred to as a computer technician or computer user support specialist. In this profession, your job would consist of providing customer service, offering technical support and maintaining computer systems. This could include preparing a maintenance and production schedule, handling user support inquiries, resolving operational problems and upgrading servers, workstations and other computer systems. One important aspect of your job would include keeping accurate records of computer systems problems and the steps taken to solve them, which could entail documenting specific issues and their solutions, costs and causes.

You might be responsible for maintaining an inventory of supplies used for computer maintenance, such as hand tools, soldering kits and wiring. As a computer technologist, you would often field phone calls, answering questions and helping users resolve technical issues on their own. In this respect, you would need to be able to communicate on a non-technical level to solve highly technical issues. Other job duties could include the following:

* Obtaining vendor support
* Documenting operating procedures
* Researching products and software
* Preparing emergency protocols
* Performing data backups and recovery
* Adhering to organizational policies

**What Kind of Education Do I Need?**

You might only need a high school diploma if you can demonstrate technical proficiency and relevant skills. However, you could prepare for a computer technologist position through an associate's degree program in a computer-related field. While several schools offer programs in computer science, you could also pursue an associate's degree in computer networking, computer programming or information systems. Additionally, some computer science programs allow you to select a specialty, such as computer-aided design and drafting (CADD), graphic design or electronics.

Most associate's degree programs in computer science can be completed in 1-2 years, and many offer online courses. Classes often combine didactic learning with hands-on training in computer labs that teach you about the latest hardware and software. The following are examples of classes you might find in the curriculum:

* Assembly language programming
* Data structures
* Object-oriented programming
* UNIX operating systems
* Logic and design
* Electronics for computers
* Network applications

You might make yourself more competitive in the job market by earning a bachelor's degree in computer science or a related field. A bachelor's degree program typically takes four years to finish and usually incorporates general education courses. Many 2- and 4-year degree programs in a technology-related field facilitate internships to help you gain professional experience.

**What Could I Expect in This Field?**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that employment for computer user support specialists was expected to grow about 13% between 2014 and 2024 (*www.bls.gov*). Jobs were expected be created by the growing number of organizations opting to upgrade their computer equipment and software, creating a need for experienced specialists to install and repair according to technically complex requirements. The BLS also estimated that computer user support specialists earned a median salary of $48,620 as of May 2015.

**What Are Some Related Alternative Careers?**

There are several other career options for those interested in computers; all require a bachelor's degree. Computer programmers create codes to ensure computer software works properly. Database administrator is another option similar to computer technologist. A database administrator organizes and stores data so it is available to computer users. Software developers create applications so users can complete tasks on computers or mobile devices. Other software developers focus on the system that runs the device.

<http://learn.org/articles/What_is_a_Computer_Technologist.html>