Computer Support Specialist CompTIA A+ (& Security+ & Network+)

Computer support specialists provide help and advice regarding computer software and equipment. There are many different types of computer support specialists. Technical support specialists, or IT employees, generally assist other employees with their own organization or business. Help-desk technicians, on the other hand, usually assist non-IT users with questions or trouble they might be experiencing with their computers. Solving information technology problems (IT) in a timely manner is important because organizations and individuals depend on their computer systems to accomplish daily tasks.

Much of the help provided by Computer support technicians takes place either over the phone, or electronically. In order to diagnose and solve computer issues at a distance, Computer support technicians must pay close attention to customers as they describe their concerns, and then clearly communicate steps for fixing whatever problems are identified. Common services technicians may offer include training new users in installation, word processing, printing, and email communications.

Some technicians may provide support in-person should the situation call for it. Typical in-person assistance might include set-up or repair of computer equipment and related devices. Computer support technicians offering more advanced assistance may analyze, troubleshoot, and evaluate computer network problems.

Computer support specialists can work in a variety of different industries such as education, finance, healthcare, and telecommunication. Oftentimes businesses hire computer support specialists by contracting them in from outside firms. Specialists may also be able to work from home. However, when working from home, traveling to the site of a problem may be necessary. Most specialists work full-time. Because they may need to be available 24 hours a day, nights and weekend work is possible.

Indiana Wage Information

	Entry	Median
Hourly Wage	$16.33	$20.85

Job Outlook in Indiana

Long term	11.3 % (increase)
Short Term	3.6 % (increase)

*Data collected from hoosierdata.in.gov

Job Duties

- Resolve problems by answering computer software or hardware operation questions
- Teach computer users how to properly use hardware or software
- Install or repair hardware, software, or equipment
- Evaluate software or hardware to determine needed improvements or upgrades
- Program computers
- Set up employee equipment and make sure that cables, operating systems, and software are properly installed
- Determine the best software to use for a project
- Maintain proper functioning of networks
- Determine problems dealing with internet systems
- Be able to use a variety of computer software

Important Qualities

Listening skills – must be able to listen to others, taking time to understand what is said and knowing when to ask questions

Speaking skills – must be able to effectively convey solutions to computer problems in layman's terms

Interpersonal skills – must be patient and understanding when assisting people who are frustrated with the software or hardware they are attempting to use

Problem-solving skills – must be able to identify, analyze, and provide a solution for computer problems

Critical thinking – must be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of approaches to problems

Skills and Knowledge

Technical	English Language Arts
– Knowledge of computers, electronics, and related equipment is helpful – Provide quality customer service and assess customer satisfaction – Knowledge of telecommunication systems is also helpful – Organize things or actions based upon a pattern, rule, or set of rules – Use office procedures and terminology	– Read and understand work-related materials – Effectively convey what a person needs through writing
	Math
	– Be able to order things based on a rule or set of rules related to numbers or mathematical operations

Certification and Advancement

The certification and education requirements for a computer support specialist may vary from job to job. CompTIA A+ is an entry-level certification for a computer support specialist. Because it is vendor neutral, required for Dell, Intel, and Lenovo service technicians, CompTIA A+ is one of the most popular IT certifications with over 90,000 IT professionals certified. CompTIA is recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense and is an accredited certifier through ANSI (American National Standards Institute).

To obtain a CompTIA A+ certification, individuals must pass two exams. The first, CompTIA A+ 220-801 is about the basics of computer technology, installation and configuration of PC's, laptops and related hardware, and basic networking. The second, CompTIA A+ 220-802 involves skills needed for installing and configuring PC operating systems and configuring common features for mobile operating systems like Android and Apple iOS.

CompTIA A+ certification is good for three years, and when necessary can be renewed through CompTIA's Continuing Education Program. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) can be obtained by earning a higher level certification, completing activities that demonstrate new learning, or taking a newer version of the previously taken certification exam. Other renewal requirements include annually signing a code of ethics, and paying maintenance fees. If a person holds multiple certifications, renewal of their highest level certification will automatically renew any lower certifications.

CompTIA offers a variety of other certifications which can allow an individual to continue their movement along a number of IT career ladders. Two certifications building upon CompTIA A+ knowledge and skills are the CompTIA Network+ and CompTIA Security+ certification. Network+ focuses on network technologies, installation and configuration, media and topologies, management, and security. Many companies recommend it for networking technicians and it is also recognized by the Department of Defense. Security+ prepares students for anticipating and guarding against security risks, and is one of several certifications recognized by the U.S Department of Defense for military personnel dealing with information assurance.

How can YOU get involved?

The world of work relies on the foundational skills students acquire in your classrooms and/or programs!

- Know your students'/clients' interests and career goals
- Affirm the value of the skills/hobbies students demonstrate both in and outside of the classroom
- Infuse your classroom culture and or meetings with career-minded activities
- Provide time to make connections between the material learned in adult education or workshops and students' daily lives/career aspirations
- Know the basic job descriptions and training requirements of in-demand occupations in your area
- Know which WorkINdiana programs are available in your region
- Know the processes for referring students to postsecondary or on-the-job training
- Post resources where students can find more information about further education/training and careers