

Three Routes into Information Technology

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Dated source guide — BLS May 2024 pay data, checked August 6, 2026. Median pay is national. It is not starting pay, local pay, or a promise. Employer requirements vary.

Route 1: Computer User Support Specialist

BLS preparation: Some college courses are common. Candidates may qualify with a high school diploma plus relevant IT certifications.

2024 national median pay: \$60,340

Time consideration: A four-year degree is not automatically required for every position. Certification study time varies by learner and provider.

Tradeoff: This route may allow earlier entry, but requirements vary and the national median is lower than the other routes on this sheet.

Route 2: Computer Network Support Specialist

BLS preparation: An associate degree is typical.

2024 national median pay: \$73,340

Time consideration: An associate degree is commonly designed as a two-year college program, though actual completion time varies.

Tradeoff: More formal study than the first route; broader network responsibilities and a higher national median.

Route 3: Software Developer

BLS preparation: A bachelor's degree in computer and information technology or a related field is typical.

2024 national median pay: \$133,080

Time consideration: A bachelor's degree is commonly designed as a four-year program, though actual completion time varies.

Tradeoff: Longer formal preparation; different work centered on designing applications or programs and a higher national median.

About certifications and cost

CompTIA A+ is one example of a vendor-neutral IT certification. Exam versions, voucher prices, study time, and district payment options change. Use a current official CompTIA or district source if your teacher asks you to compare cost. Do not copy an old price from a search result.

BLS sources: Computer Support Specialists; Software Developers, Quality Assurance Analysts, and Testers.