



Computer Support Specialist

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Job Description:

Computer support specialists help people solve problems with their computer hardware and software.

Gross Monthly Income:

\$3,800

Wages:

Average median yearly pay is about 46,000 a year in Utah.

Schedule: May be able to work at home. As technology advances, specialists will be able to identify problems from their own computers.



Advancement:

Computer support specialists may advance by gaining skills in other areas of interest. By completing additional training, specialists may move up to computer programmer jobs. Advancing to other positions may require gaining experience on the job or taking continuing education courses.

Computer support specialists with leadership skills may become supervisors. Others with an interest in business may open their own computer support consulting firm.

Education & Experience:

- ◆ Completed High School
- ◆ Complete formal training
- ◆ Complete moderate term on-the-job training

High

School Courses:

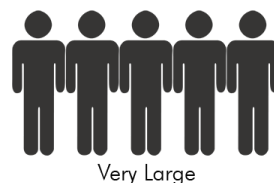
- ◆ Computer Applications
- ◆ Computer Programming
- ◆ Computer Science
- ◆ Keyboarding

Work Conditions:

- ◆ High level of social interaction.
- ◆ Often placed in conflict situations in which others may be rude or angry due to frustration with computers.
- ◆ Repeat the same physical and mental activities
- ◆ Sit for long periods of time.
- ◆ Work as part of a team
- ◆ Always work indoors

Travel: None

Job Outlook:



Hours a Week:

40

Leisure Time:

Medium

Knowledge:

- ◆ Computers & Electronics
- ◆ English Language
- ◆ Clerical
- ◆ Engineering & Technology

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Overview

It's always big news when a new computer operating system is released. Some computer stores even have parties to celebrate. It's not always a party to install the software, however. You may accidentally install the wrong version. Or, every time you start your computer, it crashes after five minutes. Or, you do everything right, but there's a bug somewhere in the program. The screen freezes. You throw up your hands. You need help fixing the computer, but who will help you?

Computer support specialists help coworkers or people who bought their companies' products. No matter which group they work with, computer support specialists have the same basic tasks. They start by having computer users describe what is wrong. By asking questions, they try to learn enough about the problem so that they can create a short list of items that might be causing the problem. Then they either make the repairs or tell customers what to change.

When helping coworkers, computer support specialists are able to use the computers that are not working properly. They test or monitor systems to locate the problems. They may read technical manuals to learn more about what to do. Once they have some ideas, specialists make repairs. This may mean reinstalling software or replacing hardware that is not working. Once they have made changes, support specialists test computers to make sure they work. They may continue to monitor computers to see if the changes fixed the problems or if more work needs to be done. Specialists may document what repairs they made and what hardware or software they bought.

Computer support specialists talk with managers and staff about the company's computer needs. Then they find computers or software that meet the company's needs. They may evaluate the software and discuss it with managers before buying anything. Specialists install software following manufacturers' guidelines. At larger companies, specialists may develop training materials and teach staff how to use new software. In large companies, specialists may supervise other computer support staff.

Some computer support specialists help customers who bought products from computer hardware and software vendors. These specialists communicate with customers by telephone or e-mail. Unlike computer support specialists who help their coworkers, these specialists do not have access to the computers that are not working. Thus, they must spend more time talking to customers and finding out what is wrong. They may talk customers through how to install software or replace hardware. They also may teach customers how to use software. When support specialists discover that the hardware their employer sold a customer is not working, they may send out new parts. If their company's products are not the cause of the problem, they refer customers to the manufacturer of their computer. These specialists document the type of questions they answer each day.

Because computer hardware and software are constantly changing, support specialists must be aware of developments in the field. They may attend conferences and trainings or read magazines to learn about changes.

Pathway:
Information
Technology