

DELTA COLLEGE  
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES

## **Computer Support Specialist**

Salary Range: \$24,700-\$68,540 annually.

Personal Interests: Activities relating to administration, maintenance, and support of computer systems.

Work Environment: Normally work in well-lit, comfortable offices or computer laboratories.

### **Description**

Almost every computer user encounters a problem occasionally, whether it is the disaster of a crashing hard drive or the annoyance of a forgotten password. Computer support specialists provide the technical assistance, support, and advice customers and other users may need when resolving computer related problems.

Many support specialists interpret problems and provide technical support for computer hardware, software, and systems. They may be responsible for answering telephone calls, analyzing problems using automated diagnostic programs, and resolving recurrent difficulties. Working on peripheral equipment such as monitors, keyboards, and printers may also fall in their job description.

Computer support specialists may specialize as: Technical Support Specialists, Help-Desk Technicians, Network or Computer Systems Administrators, and Computer Security Specialists.

### **Working Conditions**

Computer support specialists may work alone or as a member of a troubleshooting team. Most work in well-lit, comfortable offices or in computer laboratories. Those who work as consultants are susceptible to travel and may be away from their offices most of the time; sometimes spending months working in a client's office.

Most support specialists work 40 hours a week, but that may include being "on call" via pager or telephone for rotating evening or weekend work if the employer requires computer support over extended hours. Often overtime may be necessary when unexpected technical problems arise.

Like other workers who spend long periods of time in front of a computer terminal, computer support specialists are susceptible to eyestrain, back discomfort, and hand and wrist problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

### **Training, Other Qualifications**

Due to the wide range of skills required, there are many paths of entry to a job as a computer support specialist. However, many employers prefer to hire persons with some formal college education. A Bachelor's degree in computer science or information systems is a prerequisite for some jobs; however, other jobs may require only a computer-related associate degree.

Delta College offers five Computer Science Technology Associate Degree options: Computer Applications, Networking, PC Systems/Support, Programming, and Web Information Technology.

Some companies are becoming more flexible about requiring a college degree for support positions because of the explosive demand for specialists.

However, certification and practical experience demonstrating these skills will be essential for applicants without a degree.

Some personal qualifications for becoming a computer support specialist include having strong problem solving, analytical, and communication skills. Effective communication skills are crucial in this field, as you will deal with other computer personnel, customers, and employees. Strong writing skills are also important and are useful in preparing help manuals and writing various reports.

### **Job Outlook**

Employment is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2014 as organizations continue to adopt and integrate increasingly sophisticated technology. Computer system design and related services are projected to remain one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. economy, despite recent job losses. However, some of the growth may be due in part to the outsourcing overseas of jobs due to budget cuts and ability for support specialist to be contacted remotely.

Job prospects should be best for college graduates who are up to date with the latest skills and technologies. Those who have strong computer skills but do not have a bachelor's degree should continue to qualify for some entry-level positions.

### **Earnings**

Median annual earnings of computer support specialists were \$40,430 in May 2004. The middle 50 percent earned between \$30,980 and \$53,010. The

lowest 10 percent earned less than \$24,190, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$69,110.

In Michigan, estimated salaries included the following but may vary depending on the size of the employer and geographical area. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2006 salaries in selected areas were:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Range</b>
Michigan	\$43,460	\$24,700-\$64,590
Ann Arbor	\$41,930	\$21,350-\$63,370
Bay City	\$35,070	\$24,480-\$52,400
Flint	\$39,220	\$22,510-\$63,470
Saginaw	\$35,120	\$23,610-\$48,810

### **Related Occupations**

Microcomputer Specialist, Computer Programmers, Computer Software Engineers, Computer Systems Analysts, Database Administrators, and Computer Scientists, Information Systems Analyst, Computer Security Professional, and Computer Service Technician.

ComputerSupportSpecialist.doc SC 9/07  
Sources: Michigan Occupational Information System, eDiscover, and Occupational Outlook Handbook

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