

YOUR ROAD TO

IT SUPPORT ENGINEER

A practical 90-day plan to learn the essentials, build real IT labs, show your work and start applying for entry-level roles.



WHAT YOU WILL GET

12-week study schedule • 5 portfolio labs • Certification choices • Interview preparation • Job-search checklist

THE BIG PICTURE

Your 90-day roadmap

Four stages. Twelve weeks. One goal: demonstrate that you can solve common IT support problems reliably.

01**FOUNDATIONS**

Weeks 1-3

Computer hardware, Windows basics, troubleshooting and service desk habits.

02**NETWORK + SYSTEMS**

Weeks 4-6

TCP/IP, DNS, DHCP, Microsoft 365 and Active Directory basics.

03**SECURE + AUTOMATE**

Weeks 7-9

Security essentials, backups, remote support and beginner PowerShell.

04**BUILD + APPLY**

Weeks 10-12

Finish a portfolio capstone, polish your CV and practice interviews.

WEEKLY STUDY ROUTINE**3 HOURS**

Guided study

4 HOURS

Hands-on labs

2 HOURS

Troubleshoot + document

ENTRY-LEVEL ROLES TO SEARCH

IT Support Technician

Help Desk / Service Desk Analyst

Desktop Support Technician

Junior IT Support Engineer

Technical Support Specialist

Junior Endpoint Support Analyst

Reality check: 90 days can produce a strong beginner portfolio, but readiness depends on your starting knowledge, practice time and local job requirements. A certificate or roadmap does not guarantee employment.

STAGE ONE

Build IT foundations

Learn to diagnose problems before you try to fix them. Practice in a test environment, not on someone else's work device.

WEEKS 1-2

Hardware + Windows

Understand how computers work and confidently support Windows users.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Identify CPU, RAM, SSD, ports and common peripherals.
- Install Windows in a virtual machine; configure updates and accounts.
- Diagnose slow boot, low disk space and printer problems.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Hardware checklist + 3 troubleshooting notes.

WEEKS 3-4

Networking basics

Explain how a device connects to Wi-Fi, the LAN and the internet.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Learn IP, subnet, gateway, DHCP, DNS, TCP/UDP and ports.
- Use ipconfig, ping, tracert, nslookup and ipconfig /flushdns.
- Simulate DNS failure and incorrect gateway settings.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Network diagram + 3 documented fixes.

PRACTICE TICKET #001

"A user says the office Wi-Fi shows connected, but websites will not load."

Record the symptoms, test the gateway, identify DNS vs connectivity, explain your fix, and verify with the user.

THE SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK ON EVERY SUPPORT TICKET

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ What is not working? | ☐ When did it last work? |
| ☐ Who or what is affected? | ☐ What changed recently? |
| ☐ What have you already tried? | ☐ How will we verify the fix? |

Tip: Include screenshots of your own VMs and commands in your portfolio. Remove personal information, passwords, license keys and any confidential workplace details.

STAGE TWO

Manage users & endpoints

Move beyond fixing laptops: understand accounts, permissions, shared resources and the security practices used by real IT teams.

WEEKS 5-6

Identity + Microsoft 365

Learn user lifecycle and permission basics in a safe lab.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Create local users, groups and folder permissions.
- Explore Active Directory OU, DNS and Group Policy in a test VM.
- Explore M365 admin, Entra ID, MFA and password reset flows.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Sample onboarding/offboarding checklist.

WEEKS 7-8

Security + recovery

Support devices without exposing company data or users.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Practice MFA setup, OS patching and phishing verification.
- Configure a basic backup and test file restoration.
- Use least privilege; practice safe remote support sessions.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Secure endpoint checklist + restore log.

CAPSTONE PREPARATION

Simulate a 10-person office

Plan 10 users, 3 departments, a shared printer, a private finance folder, onboarding steps and a basic incident process. Use fictional data only.

DO NOT SKIP THESE SUPPORT SKILLS

- ☐ Explain a fix in plain language
- ☐ Document each change and its rollback
- ☐ Know when and how to escalate
- ☐ Never request a user's password
- ☐ Verify identity before account recovery

STAGE THREE + FOUR

Automate. Build. Apply.

Use the final month to turn practice into work samples and get ready for real interviews.

WEEKS 9-10

PowerShell + capstone

Reduce repetitive tasks and prove a complete support workflow.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Use Get-ComputerInfo, Get-Service and Get-EventLog or Get-WinEvent.
- Write a read-only device inventory script and export CSV.
- Complete an office IT support lab and 10 sample tickets.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Scripts + lab walkthrough + 10 ticket reports.

WEEKS 11-12

CV + job applications

Present real evidence of what you can do.

FOCUS + PRACTICE

- Create a 1-page CV and LinkedIn skills summary.
- Publish 3 polished lab write-ups on GitHub or a portfolio.
- Practice 10 help-desk interview scenarios; apply to relevant roles.

EVIDENCE TO SAVE

Portfolio links + tracked applications.

YOUR PORTFOLIO HOME PAGE SHOULD SHOW

- ☐ Who you are and the IT roles you target
- ☐ Screenshots of a functioning Windows and network lab
- ☐ At least 3 troubleshooting tickets with outcomes
- ☐ Clear scripts or configuration notes you wrote yourself
- ☐ What failed, how you fixed it, and what you learned

Use real observations and measured results. Do not invent previous employment, certifications, production deployments, savings or service-level improvements.

BUILD YOUR EVIDENCE

5 projects employers can inspect

Each project should have a short README: objective, environment, setup, troubleshooting, results and screenshots.

01

Windows troubleshooting lab

TOOLS: Windows VM, Event Viewer, Device Manager, update logs

PROOF: Reproduce and resolve 3 issues; show before/after evidence.

02

Small office network

TOOLS: Packet Tracer or home router test network

PROOF: Draw IP plan; troubleshoot DNS, DHCP and unreachable host.

03

User onboarding + access

TOOLS: Windows Server/AD lab or local groups; M365 demo if licensed

PROOF: Create/deactivate test accounts; verify group permissions and MFA.

04

Secure workstation + backup

TOOLS: Windows Security, update tools, built-in file backup

PROOF: Configure controls and perform a documented restore test.

05

IT health report script

TOOLS: PowerShell and CSV export

PROOF: Gather device specs, storage health and service status in read-only mode.

QUALITY RULE > Three thoroughly documented projects beat ten unfinished demos.

CHOOSE CREDENTIALS WISELY

Certifications that make sense

Learn the skills first. Certificates can validate knowledge, but they are not a substitute for labs, communication and troubleshooting.

START HERE

VIEW >

CompTIA A+

Best general beginner credential for hardware, operating systems, support and security. Current series: Core 1 220-1201 + Core 2 220-1202.

OPTIONAL ENTRY

VIEW >

Cisco CCST Networking

A beginner networking option. Useful if TCP/IP and office connectivity are your weak areas.

NEXT STEP

VIEW >

CompTIA Network+

Builds deeper networking and troubleshooting knowledge after you have basic support skills. Current track: N10-009.

M365 FOCUS

VIEW >

Microsoft AB-900 learning

Introduction to Microsoft 365 and AI administration. A good learning path for support teams that use M365.

LATER, NOT DAY ONE

VIEW >

Microsoft MD-102

Intermediate endpoint administration with Intune; consider once you have hands-on device-management experience.

Note: Microsoft MS-900 retired on 31 March 2026. Do not purchase an outdated MS-900 exam-preparation package.

GET INTERVIEW-READY

From lab to job application

Use evidence from your projects to show how you troubleshoot, communicate and protect user data.

SAMPLE CV PROJECT SECTION

IT Support Home Lab | Independent Project

- Built a Windows virtual lab to troubleshoot device, login and networking issues.
- Documented 10 simulated service tickets with diagnostics, actions and verification.
- Created a read-only PowerShell inventory report and exported results to CSV.

FIVE COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

01

A computer is slow. Where do you start?

Ask about changes; inspect CPU/RAM/storage, startup apps, updates and logs.

02

A user cannot sign in. What do you check?

Verify identity, assess error and scope, account state, connectivity and MFA.

03

Wi-Fi connects but internet fails. What next?

Check IP settings, gateway, DNS, scope of outage and test name resolution.

04

How would you handle a suspected phishing email?

Ask the user not to interact further; report and follow the escalation process.

05

When do you escalate a ticket?

When scope, permissions, severity or time limits exceed your authority.

Honest interview rule: say "in my home lab" or "in a simulated service desk" when describing practice. Never present lab work as paid employment.

BE READY FOR REAL TICKETS

Your 10-ticket practice sprint

Create a fictional service desk queue and write a short report for each ticket: symptoms, priority, tests, root cause, fix and verification.

T01	Laptop will not boot	Hardware / startup
T02	Printer says offline	Printing / network
T03	Websites fail, ping works	DNS troubleshooting
T04	Cannot access shared folder	Permissions
T05	Forgotten password	Identity verification
T06	MFA device changed	Secure account recovery
T07	Outlook will not sync	Application / connectivity
T08	Disk almost full	Storage / maintenance
T09	Suspicious email reported	Security escalation
T10	New employee setup	Provisioning checklist

TICKET DOCUMENTATION TEMPLATE

ID | Priority | User problem | Reproduction steps | Diagnostic commands | Fix | Security considerations | User confirmation | Escalation / follow-up

KEEP THIS PAGE HANDY

Final launch checklist

Tick off each item before you start applying. The resources below are free to access; certification exams and optional subscriptions may cost money.

- ☐ I can troubleshoot a basic Windows issue without guessing.
- ☐ I can explain DNS, DHCP, IP address and default gateway.
- ☐ I can set up a test user account and protect it with MFA.
- ☐ I have completed at least 3 documented support projects.
- ☐ I have written 10 practice tickets using consistent notes.
- ☐ My CV has clear project evidence and honest experience descriptions.
- ☐ My LinkedIn or portfolio contains links to my work.
- ☐ I can confidently answer common support interview scenarios.

FREE LEARNING RESOURCES

[Microsoft Learn: Windows troubleshooting](#)

[Cisco Networking Academy: free courses](#)

[Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 administration](#)

[Professor Messer: free A+ video training](#)

[Microsoft Learn: Windows PowerShell](#)

[Microsoft MD-102: current official study guide](#)

YOU DO NOT NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING TO START.

Learn the essentials, demonstrate safe troubleshooting and apply while continuing to improve. Keep practicing after your first interview.