

TOP TEN SERIES

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BUILT
BLACKS UNITED IN LEADING TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL

How to Get into Cyber

Diversity in cybersecurity is instrumental in advancing the industry and creating a more secure world.



ISC2 is proud to be a top resource to help professionals acquire the best skills they need to become information security leaders with the mission to support professionals by providing industry information, vast networking, collaboration opportunities, and development tools. We have the necessary **tips and resources** to help diverse professionals thrive in the industry and take their careers to the next level.

We know that it's essential for cybersecurity professionals to reflect the people they serve and protect. Diversifying the industry improves online defenses and allows a space for different perspectives to contribute to the advancement of technology.

Our efforts have provided a diverse, equitable, and inclusive cybersecurity space for more than 500,000 members, associates and candidates who serve in critical cyber, information, software, and infrastructure security roles.

As a part of this commitment, we have joined forces with Blacks United in Leading Technology® International, Inc. (**BUILT**) to provide multiple guides with proven methods that Black and diverse professionals use to get in, stay, and advance in cybersecurity.

Are you considering entering the exciting field of cybersecurity?

If not, maybe you should! Today there is a worldwide gap of 3.4 million needed cybersecurity workers and over 760,000 open jobs across the United States, alone, (see [CyberSeek real-time dashboard](#)). Plus, the **global cybersecurity workforce needs to grow 65%** to effectively defend global organizations' critical assets.

Cybersecurity offers many avenues and routes within the field. Although it's known for being highly technical, there are plenty of non technical roles like sales, administration, project management, along with many more. Finding your passion and path is a vital aspect in considering if cybersecurity is your next career move.

Regardless though of your interests, there are real barriers to entry in the cybersecurity industry. And if you are in the workforce bringing a diverse background in ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation to the industry, the challenges for you are even more real.

If you are decided on or interested in a lucrative career in cybersecurity, here are ten practical tips and strategies to employ today to make your move into cyber.





ISC2[™] + BUILT[®]
BLACKS UNITED IN LEADING TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL

TIPS

**on Getting into
CYBERSECURITY**

1. Get Formal or Informal Education

Without a doubt, a proven way to get into cybersecurity is to enroll in college and graduate with a degree in cybersecurity. According to the **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**, people with a college degree earn about 67% more than those whose highest qualification is a high school diploma. However, a college degree doesn't guarantee employment.

Considering the investment of time, money and energy required for a college degree, this begs the question: Is a cybersecurity degree worth it?

A study by **Forbes** says, "Yes", that after 20 years in a cybersecurity position, you're bound to recoup your degree investment about 20 times over. And today, there is a plethora of great colleges and universities that provide associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in cybersecurity to choose from. Right alongside cybersecurity education paths is complementary education in computer science, programming, database management, computer hardware engineering, network administration, cloud computing, information technology management, and information security and assurance that can give you an edge at getting into the cyber industry.

Non-degreed and informal training is invaluable too.

Several paid boot camps and free grant-based training programs exist such as **Minorities in Cybersecurity**, **Year Up**, and **Per Scholas**. Several for-profit consulting vendors pay minimum wage to candidates who want training to learn complementary roles like software testing and programming. A diligent learner can find several free and paid online labs, videos, presentations, and workshops on techniques and technologies that support the cybersecurity industry.





2. Possess Complementary Education

Many people enter the cybersecurity industry with complementary experience and education from other professions and careers. Don't feel that you must start your formal education over with an associate's or bachelor's degree to assure your chances of "getting in" to cyber.

Education and experience in information technology, engineering, project management, marketing, sales, and education provide an excellent foundation for pivoting into cybersecurity.

- See, *Career Switchers*, Tip #4: Show confidence in your existing skill

3. Get Certified to Demonstrate Your Knowledge

Regardless of whether you have a 4-year college degree, earning certifications is always a great way to get noticed to win your next big career break. In the latest report from **edX and the Linux Foundation**, 72% of hiring managers surveyed said they would be more likely to hire a candidate who had a certification, up a whopping 20% from the previous year's numbers. A multitude of certification programs are available, and there are more free or low-cost sources of training for them than ever before.

Certifications show employers that you're acquiring the proper skills to keep up with the latest threats, and structured training and certification, like **ISC2 Certified in Cybersecurity certification**, can accelerate your path to securing a job and advancing in the industry. In **PC Magazine's 2022 report**, certifications in cybersecurity continually rank among the top certifications to obtain to earn the highest-paying jobs.

4. Expand and Use Your Global Network

Professional networking is one of the most powerful approaches to utilize to get into the cybersecurity industry. In **BUiLT's** 2022 annual survey, professional networking continued to rank as the #1 reason people join. Through networking, professionals meet peers and leaders who can help them with mentorship, job opportunities, and to provide resources.

Numerous online resources give tips on how to employ professional networking in your job search strategy. The important message here is to create, expand and use your network. Based on lessons we all learned from the pandemic, you can build professional networks remotely.

Keep in mind, while networking, you can be one person away from the opportunity of your dreams.

5. Take Advantage of the Power of Mentorships

The benefits from mentorship are well documented, as mentors can open doors and shape careers for entry-level cybersecurity professionals. Recent surveys continue to show the importance of obtaining and cultivating a mentor, but few job seekers and employed professionals take advantage of them.¹ Why the gap?

Most people are afraid to ask for an initial meeting. The fear of rejection is real, reaching out to someone you admire but whom you may not know so well — especially if that person is more senior than you can be intimidating. It is even more intimidating initiating a relationship online than it is casually walking by a potential mentor's office or desk, bumping into them in the hallway, or chatting in person during a networking event.

Actually, **studies show**, most mentorship relations developed naturally, and not part of a formal program. So, mastering Tip #4 (above) is a great way to obtain a mentor. Job seekers can also gain mentors through internships, jobs, and personal relationships, and in professional organizations like ISC2 and BUiLT.

As stated earlier, mentorships also don't have to be a part of a formal program. You can connect and engage with a mentor on an informal basis, which can often be more beneficial. It is OK too to have a few mentors, and develop relationships that work best for you and your individual needs.

¹ Seventy-six percent of people say that mentors are important, but only 37% actually have one. Harvard Business Review, What's the Right Way to Find a Mentor?, J.T. Phan, March 10, 2021; <https://hbr.org/2021/03/whats-the-right-way-to-find-a-mentor>

6. Work on Personal Projects

Getting into cybersecurity can be challenging, especially without a 4-year degree or possessing many current, technical certifications. You can network with people to help you in your job search, and mentors can help guide your path. But what are you going to talk about when you mention your current status in cybersecurity?

One way to sell yourself to others is by working on projects at home to strengthen your skills and gain more experience. Finding free projects online through platforms like YouTube can help you learn how to use tools and software in the workplace. Taking on different projects for practice also shows your ambition, and capacity to learn, and increases your chances of getting hired.

With the experience you gain working on your own personal projects, your conversation will shift when you talk with others about your career ambitions working in cybersecurity. You'll be able to talk about what you are doing in cybersecurity, and not just what you hope.

7. Join Available Teams and Try Many Roles

With cybersecurity including disciplines like compliance, sales, research, marketing, information technology and general information security, you can often find teams at your company, religious organizations, or other groups which can help you gain applicable skills.

Roles in teaching are beneficial in the cybersecurity industry and any volunteer work you may have had training people demonstrates one of the skills needed for implementing security programs. Work in sales or as an account manager are beneficial too as the cybersecurity industry employs many professionals who acquire and support customer accounts.



Even nonprofits and start-up companies provide a great opportunity to volunteer or to work at lower pay rates to gain experience. Young and early-staged organizations often are focused on creating sustainable revenue and organizational development, and they are consciously or unconsciously accepting the risk of poor information security practices. At these organization, you may be able to volunteer your services to implement improved security practices, or to perform some agreed, ethical hacking to identify vulnerabilities.

8. Get an Internship or Apprenticeship

One “Catch 22” that forms a barrier to entry is that many organizations require applicants to have experience in cybersecurity, even for entry-level positions. So, if you haven’t started in the field, how can you get started when many employers require some level of real-world experience? Internships and paid apprenticeships can fill that void.

Internships are often unpaid, but some are paid at levels less than competitive compensation for experienced people in the field. These opportunities are beneficial because they help professionals demonstrate entry-level on-the-job experience to potential employers. While internships are often unpaid, the skills and knowledge gained are invaluable for long-term success in the field.

Some internships include hands-on applications with industry tools, performing administrative tasks, learning to collaborate with a team, and working on specific security projects. BUILT offers internships through its equity partner, **Protecht**. Cyber apprenticeship programs can also be found through The National Institute of Standards and Technology's NICE **Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Program Finder**.

9. Be Bold

A career in cybersecurity requires a lot of time, studying, and learning. Getting your certification, having formal and informal education, and enlisting allies are all factors in succeeding at getting into the industry.

Believing in yourself and pursuing the path that works for you takes you the farthest. Keep in mind, your friends, colleagues, and peers might not support your approach at first. At the end of the day, you are responsible for your career. You should know yourself best.

Working in cybersecurity requires some level of trust, and getting jobs in this field will almost always include a person-to-person, or team interview. You will have to sell yourself, but also stand-out above the rest.

- See, *Student Pathways*, Tip #9: Follow-up and be aggressively assertive

People entering cybersecurity with diverse backgrounds have an implicit advantage – in that they bring some level of “the unknown” with them. Fill in the gaps in your resume, past experience, and education with all of the wonders of who you are. Use your uniqueness to your benefit in describing how what you have experienced as a person is exactly what an employer would want on their cybersecurity team.

The journey into cybersecurity is not complete until you succeed at your goal. Although studying, learning, practicing, and networking are good in their own right, you have made a decision to get into cybersecurity, and your job is not done until you get paid employment. Unpaid internships, volunteering, and paid work in complementary roles such as being a help desk technician are important steps along the way. While each of these successes have merit in their own right, keep your eye on the prize of getting paid to work in cybersecurity.

Do not be overly discouraged and give up because the interviews are tough, or the road to employment is sometimes hard to travel. Convert “setbacks” into ways to spring forward. Use what you learn in interviewing when you network with others and with your mentors on how to achieve your goal.

There is a **worldwide gap of 3.4 million needed cybersecurity workers**, which means the opportunities for you are essentially, limitless.

Every day people are hired into the cybersecurity profession, and you could be one of them. Join and rely on organizations like **BUILT** and **ISC2** to support your career goals. Congratulate yourself on your future success, be thankful, and then plan to advance in the field.

- See, *Staying and Advancing*, Tip #9: Follow-up and be aggressively assertive





Blacks United in Leading Technology® International (BUILT), founded in September 2020, increases the representation and participation of Black people in tech. And as we hold the **Three Doors Open**, others can follow in too.

BUILT's 2022 annual survey reconfirmed what Black professionals seek most:



**Professional
networking**



Jobs



**Technical training/certification
opportunities to advance their
careers in tech**

BUILT's growing worldwide footprint meets those needs with programming on career and professional development, technology training, and volunteer opportunities to hone leadership skills.

Our partnerships with organizations like ISC2 are vital to the industry's success at filling the hundreds of thousands of technology jobs with people who bring creativity and diversity of thought in today's business problems are solved.

ISC2 TOP TEN SERIES *Powered by BUILT*

How to Get into Cyber © 2023 - (Getting In)

Student Pathways Guide from Class to Your First Gig © 2023 - (Student Pathways)

You Already Have the Skills and the Talent: A Guide to Switching to Cybersecurity Mid-Career © 2023 - (Career Switchers)

How to Stay and Advance in Cybersecurity © 2023 - (Staying & Advancing)