



3The Basics of Being a Software Programmer

The modern idea of the software programmer has changed drastically. Today, more people are recognizing that having brains and knowing how to use them in important IT jobs is a pretty impressive accomplishment. Not only do programmer jobs allow you to contribute to the creation of something new for consumers or for businesses, but the pay isn't too bad either. Here's a look at some of the highlights of choosing this career.

What You'll Be Doing

If you decide to pursue these types of [IT jobs](#), you'll find yourself working on a team with other like-minded professionals with a single goal: the development of new software (or possibly the improvement of old software). To meet that goal, the team usually has to cover a wide range of tasks, including designing and testing the software throughout the process. You'll spend a lot of time in front of the computer but you might also be needed to join the sales and marketing team as they try to "move" the finished product.

What You Need to Succeed

Generally, software companies aren't going to fill [programmer jobs](#) with people who've been playing around with a computer in their basement instead of heading to college. That means that if this is your goal then your best bet is to get a bachelor's degree focused on computer systems or some other type of [IT jobs](#). The broader your skill set is after college the more likely you are going to be to find a job. How important is that degree? Just three years ago, four-fifths of all holders of programmer jobs held at least a bachelor's degree. If you're interested in moving up the ladder, you'll want to complete a graduate degree as well. Another good idea is to consider completing an internship in the field either prior to or immediately after graduation. This hands-on experience will help you land a position and network with others in the industry.

What the Future Looks Like

For [programmer jobs](#), the outlook is good. The estimate is a 38% increase in positions in this field through 2016. While that estimate might have been lowered some because of the economic downturn since the prediction was first made in 2006, the fact remains that software programmers are needed all the time and because their jobs require very specific skill sets that not everyone possesses and they are going to be in demand.

The pay isn't too bad either. If you get into the field with a bachelor's degree, you can expect starting salaries of over \$50,000. Median salaries vary from the mid-\$70,000 to almost \$100,000 depending on the specific type of software you are working on.

What is the Bottom Line?

If you're interested in becoming a software programmer, don't just focus on developing your skills at home. Get a college degree in the field and get as much hands-on experience as possible. The future looks very good if you have the background for these IT jobs.

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