Computer Science vs Information Technology

What Technology Degree Should You Choose?
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Technology is filled with careers that pay well and have a strong outlook. If you’re changing careers or looking to start off your career in an exciting and rewarding field, pursuing a technology degree in computer science or IT is a great choice.

So, which one should you choose? Either field can help you land a great job in technology. However, there are some differences you should be aware of before making your decision. Take a look at the following sections for more information about computer science vs IT, including career information on specific roles, the top tech companies to work for, and the top locations in the tech industry.
Computer Science vs IT: Understanding the Difference

Is there really a big difference between these two fields? What’s the practical takeaway? The following sections explore computer science vs IT, with a focus on what these subject areas involve and how you can approach choosing the major for your technology degree.

OVERVIEW

There is a simple way to look at computer science vs IT: computer science emphasizes the “science” aspect of the phrase, while IT examines technical solutions from a strategic business perspective.

Computer science looks at the “why” behind computer programs and operating systems. The field does this by analyzing problems and designs solutions using mathematics and computer science techniques. As a result, professionals in computer science are scientists. They understand different programming languages, software and database design and development, various computer processes, and more.

Like computer science, IT includes technical topics, but the focus is different. IT is more interested in how operating systems, software, and applications can be used and improved upon to solve specific business problems. That last part is critical. IT professionals examine how technological impacts an organization. Often, they’re working with clients and coworkers to develop and implement a technology plan that meets certain business needs.
VISUALIZE THE DIFFERENCE

If you’re still not sure what computer science vs IT means for you and your future, maybe it’ll help to see it. Here’s a side-by-side look at the required courses for bachelor’s degrees in computer science and IT.

### COMPUTER SCIENCE

Required courses for the online Bachelor of Science in Computer Science at CSP

- Introduction to Computer Science
- Math for Computer Science
- Introductory Programming with Java
- Modern Web Design
- Discrete Mathematics
- Database Design
- Object Oriented Programming in Java
- Server-Side Development
- Computer Architecture and Operating Systems
- Language Design and Implementation
- Software Engineering
- Data Structures and Algorithms
- Computer Science Capstone

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Required courses for the online Bachelor of Arts in Information and Technology Management at CSP

- Principles of Ethical Management
- Human Resource Management and Employment Law
- Applied Accounting and Finance
- Marketing in the Global Environment
- Analytics and Technology
- Bridging the IT Business Gap for Innovation
- Strategic Project Management for IT
- Business-Driven Information Systems and Security
- Data Management for Intelligent Business
- Applied Research Project

Note that these are only the required courses. Elective courses can alter how one degree would compare with the other.
Generally speaking, computer science is more technical and focused on the inner workings of a topic like databases, data structures, and software engineering. IT is by no means outside of technical subjects, as, for instance, data management and security are highly scientific. However, the overall emphasis is rooted in using technology to solve business problems. Even highly nuanced subjects like data management and security are approached from a business standpoint.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

There are noticeable differences between computer science and IT. If you’re considering a technology degree, you can start to gauge where your personal interests and career plans land for the question of computer science vs IT.

Be careful not to overvalue the differences. There’s no need to panic if you’re still not sure what field you should pursue. The good news to this debate between computer science and IT is that either degree is acceptable for many tech jobs. In several cases, a degree in computer science will be acceptable to employers for a position that might prefer a degree in IT, and vice versa. Both majors provide a broad overview of technology topics, and you’ll always have the opportunity to customize your degree with electives.

What careers can you target with your technology degree? Take a look at the following lists of in-demand computer science and IT jobs to see just a few examples. All employment data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).
In-demand Computer Science Jobs

Here’s a look at a few computer science jobs with strong employment outlook.

**COMPUTER AND INFORMATION RESEARCH SCIENTISTS**

As technology evolves, there will be new and innovative ways to analyze data, approach software and design products like robots. The potential is staggering. For instance, business and economics firm McKinsey Global Institute estimate that artificial intelligence techniques can have a multi-trillion-dollar impact annually. Across nine business functions in 19 industries, artificial intelligence can result in $3.5 to $5.8 trillion in value each year.

If you enjoy applying creativity to the science behind computers and technology, you could consider becoming a computer or information research scientist. This is a high-paying career with a strong job outlook.

**Job Responsibilities**

Computer and information research scientists create new approaches to computing technology and examine new ways for existing technology. By studying complex problems in computing, these professionals provide new ideas and uses for technology in business, science, medicine, and other fields.

Here are some typical duties you can expect to have as a computer or information research scientist:

- Develop theories and models to address fundamental issues in computing
- Invent new computing languages, tools, and methods to enhance how people work with computers
• Develop and improve software systems
• Design experiments testing the effectiveness of software systems
• Publish findings in academic journals and present the results at industry conferences
• Work alongside scientists and engineers

In this career, you can choose from several specialties. Common areas to specialize are data science, robotics, and programming.

**Salary and Job Outlook**

Computer and information research scientists earn a median annual wage of $114,520. The highest 10 percent earn more than $176,780 and the lowest 10 percent earn less than $65,540.

Employment of these professionals is projected to grow 19 percent by 2026. Key reasons for this high level of demand include the desire for better technology, rapid growth in data collection, and an increased emphasis on cybersecurity.

**How to Become a Computer or Information Research Scientist**

If you’d like to pursue this career, a bachelor’s degree in computer science or a related field is a good foundation. The BLS noted that this level of education is sufficient for some jobs in the federal government. Most jobs for computer and information scientists require a master’s degree in computer science or a related field.
DATABASE ADMINISTRATORS

Databases are simply a way to organize into rows, columns, and tables. It’s easy to overlook how common and integral databases are in business. Online retailers use databases to capture and process thousands of transactions a second, while protecting data. Similarly, financial institutions and healthcare organizations must manage and access databases quickly and efficiently, while ensuring the safety of sensitive data.

Database administrators help ensure that databases run smoothly and meet an organization’s needs. It’s a career choice that blends higher-than-average job outlook and pay with technical expertise and business awareness.

Job Responsibilities

Becoming a database administrator means that you’ll oversee software that stores and organizes data. You’ll make sure that information is available to users and protected from unauthorized access.

Here are some typical duties you can expect to have as a database administrator:

- Prevent data loss by backing up and restoring data as needed
- Examine the security or organizational data
- Ensure that the database operates efficiently and accurately
- Perform maintenance on database and update access permissions
- Merge old databases into new ones

Often, database administrators take care of any tasks relating to an organization’s database. Sometimes there is an opportunity to specialize in system database administration or application database administration. The first specialty, system database administration, refers to physical and technical aspects of a database, such as the upgrades and patches needed to fix program bugs. Application database administration is a specialty that deals with databases used for a specific application or set of applications, like customer service software.
Salary and Job Outlook

Database administrators earn a median annual wage of $87,020. The highest 10 percent earn more than $132,420 and the lowest 10 percent earn less than $48,480.

Employment of these professionals is projected to grow 11 percent by 2026. Companies in all sectors of the economy will have increased data needs, and database administrators will be needed to organize and present data so that analysts and stakeholders can understand it. Additionally, another factor that will positively impact the growth of database administrators is the rise in database-as-a-service, which allows database administration to take place over the internet by a third part. The BLS noted that employment growth of database administrators in this industry is 17 percent by 2026.

How to Become a Database Administrator

To become a database administrator, you’ll typically need a bachelor’s degree in a subject like computer science. Other computer- and information-related subjects are appropriate for this career as well, which means that you could earn a degree in either computer science or IT and pursue a future in database administration. Larger firms may prefer applicants with a master’s degree in computer science, information systems, or IT.
SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS

There may not be a more obvious in-demand computer science career than software developer. After all, new smartphone apps continue to show up in marketplaces, and the demand isn’t letting up. Plus, more consumer electronics are integrating computer systems, such as appliances, driving growth. Finally, add to those reasons the number of major corporations that need to innovate software to manage core business functions, and you can see how badly more software developers are needed.

Job Responsibilities

Becoming a software developer means that you’ll help develop the applications and programs that people use on a computer or another device. You could also play a role in developing underlying systems that run those devices or that control networks.

Here are some typical duties you can expect to have as a software developer:

• Consider users’ needs before designing, testing, and developing software
• Recommend software upgrades to existing programs and systems
• Plan how each part of an application or system will work together, and then design it
• Create models and diagrams that help programmers develop software code needed for an application
• Oversee software maintenance and testing to make sure a program functions correctly
• Document each aspect of an application or system as reference for future maintenance and upgrades

Specialties within software development include applications and systems. Applications software developers design computer applications ranging from word processors to
games. That is contrasted by systems software developers, who create systems that keep computers functioning properly. Examples include computer operating systems or those used in consumer electronics like cell phones and cars.

**Salary and Job Outlook**

Software developers earn a median annual wage of $101,790. The highest 10 percent earn more than $160,100 and the lowest 10 percent earn less than $59,870.

Employment of these professionals is projected to grow 24 percent by 2026. In addition to the large increase in the demand for computer software, computer security concerns and software offered over the internet could also positively impact the growth of software developers.

**How to Become a Software Developer**

Becoming a software developer often takes a bachelor’s degree in computer science, although related fields may also be acceptable. Strong programming skills are important, even though writing code is not the first priority of software developers. They work closely with programmers, making an in-depth and updated knowledge of computer languages and tools significant.

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**MORE CAREERS YOU CAN PURSUE WITH A COMPUTER SCIENCE DEGREE**

- Software Engineer
- Computer Systems Analyst
- Quality Assurance Engineer
- Web Developer
- Computer Programmer
- Software Application Tester
- Computer Systems Analyst

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**Computer Science vs Information Technology**

*What Technology Degree Should You Choose?*
In-demand IT Jobs

Here’s a look at a couple IT jobs with strong employment outlook.

**COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGERS**

Managers are needed in virtually every type of work, and the computer/IT world is no exception. Computer and information systems managers help organizations carry out their technological goals. In addition to strong job outlook, they’re rewarded handsomely with typical salary figures well into six figures.

**Job Responsibilities**

Computer and information systems managers, who are also called IT managers or IT project managers, plan and help carry out computer-related activities in an organization.

Here are some typical duties you can expect to have as a computer or information systems manager:

- Analyze a company’s computer needs and come up with upgrades for consideration
- Oversee installation and maintenance of hardware and software
- Protect the organization’s network, data, and electronic documents
- Consider the cost and benefits of new projects and explain findings to top executives
- Search for new ways to upgrade the organization’s computer systems
- Manage personnel needs for the department
- Guide the work of other IT professionals
- Negotiate with tech vendors
As you might expect, there are several types of IT managers, so specific job responsibilities will vary based on title and the organization. For instance, IT security managers oversee network and data security while IT directors oversee staffing and the overall department. There are C-level positions in this career track too. Chief information officers determine technology or information goals and then implement technological solutions. Another example is chief technology officers, who are in charge of evaluating new technology and figuring out how it can help the organization.

**Salary and Job Outlook**

Computer and information systems managers earn a median annual wage of $139,220. The highest 10 percent earn more than $208,000 and the lowest 10 percent earn less than $83,860.

Employment of these professionals is projected to grow 12 percent by 2026. Firms will increase their operations to digital platforms, driving demand of IT managers. Other trends impacting job growth in this field is increased focus on cybersecurity and a rise in the popularity of cloud computing.

**How to Become a Computer or Information Systems Manager**

In addition to work experience, you’ll need a bachelor’s degree in a computer-related field to become an IT manager. Your major can be in a field like IT management or computer science. Whatever degree you choose, courses in management, computer programming, software development, and mathematics are important, according to the BLS. Some employers require computer and information systems managers to have a master’s degree.
The global cybersecurity market is projected to exceed $1 trillion in spending by 2021. Growing threats to organizations’ data security will have considerable impact on professionals tasked with protecting computer networks and systems.

Looking for a growing and lucrative career field? There may be no better combination of employment factors in computer-related occupations than information security analyst. Outlook for this profession is the **strongest of all major computer and information technology occupations**, according to the BLS, and median pay is just under six digits.

**Job Responsibilities**

As an information security analyst, you’ll plan and carry out security measures to help protect an organization’s computer networks and systems. Due to the increasing number of cyberattacks and the steps needed to confront these threats, responsibilities in this career are growing.

Here are some typical duties that you can expect to have as an information security analyst:

- Monitor networks for security breaches and investigate any violations that occur
- Create reports that detail damage caused by security breaches
- Install software that can protect data
- Conduct penetration testing, which involves simulating attacks in an effort to expose vulnerabilities
- Research the latest information security trends
- Help develop standards and best practices for the organization
- Assist employees with installing and updating security products

54% of companies experienced one or more successful attacks that compromised data and/or IT infrastructure in the past 12 months. 

*Source: blog.barkly.com/2018-cybersecurity-statistics*
Salary and Job Outlook

Information security analysts earn a median annual wage of $95,510. The highest 10 percent earn more than $153,090 and the lowest 10 percent earn less than $55,560.

Employment of these professionals is projected to grow 28 percent by 2026. That number places information security analysts among the top 20 fastest growing occupations. Major reasons for that growth include the rise in cyberattacks, as well as the need for financial corporations and healthcare institutions to protect sensitive information.

How to Become an Information Security Analyst

If you’d like to become an information security analyst, you will probably need a bachelor’s degree in a computer-related field. Most positions require this level of education along with some experience.

An IT degree may be a slightly better fit for this role than computer science, given the strategic- and business- focus that an IT curriculum provides. However, either degree can allow you to pursue a career in cybersecurity.

MORE CAREERS YOU CAN PURSUE WITH AN IT DEGREE

- Project Manager
- Systems Architect
- Systems Analyst
- Infrastructure Architect
- Business Analyst
- Product Manager
- Operations Manager
- IT Strategist
- Security Architect
- Information Systems Manager
- Chief Technology Officer
- Chief Information Officer
- IT Consultant
Computer science and IT jobs span every type of industry and business size. However, it’s natural to target positions at leading companies that are known for being on the cutting edge of tech. That sentiment characterizes many of the corporate names that are recognized as the top companies to work for.

Data scientists from the employment website Indeed looked into more than 18 million reviews to come up with a list of the best tech employers. Criteria includes culture, management, pay, job security and advancement, and work-life balance.

**INDEED’S TOP RATED COMPANIES IN TECH**

Companies ranked most highly by employees in the tech industry

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<td>15.</td>
<td>Applied Materials</td>
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The following list takes a closer look at the top 5 companies to work for. While they’re all well-known for their reputation in areas like software and social media, these companies are recognized for fast-paced, exciting, and rewarding work environments.
5. SAP

SAP is a multinational corporation known for software and software-related services. It’s the third largest independent software manufacturer in the world, in terms of market capitalization, according to the company’s website.

In Indeed’s analysis, SAP ranked third for work-life balance and job security and advancement. However, SAP has earned accolades as a top tech employer in many areas.

- For 12 straight years, SAP has been named the world’s most sustainable software company in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.
- Global accolades include being ranked in the top 100 companies as a technology leader (Thomson Reuters), most valuable brand (BrandZ), and as an employer of remote jobs (FlexJobs).
- Accolades specific to the Americas include best places to work (Glassdoor; first in Canada and 11th in Canada), one of the 100 best companies to work for (Fortune), best workplaces for giving back (Great Places to Work Institute), and best employers for diversity (Forbes).

SAP has more than 94,900 employees across 180-plus countries.

4. GOOGLE

Google powers a large majority of online searches. The multinational tech giant has also branched out into other fields like software and hardware, creating a long list of products and services.

Indeed found that Google was ranked second by workers for management and third for culture. Employees pointed to how challenging work is done in a fun and relaxed environment. According to Glassdoor, Google is the No. 5 best place to work at, given the company’s excellent benefits and exciting products. Fortune named Google the best company to work for in 2017, making it 6 years in a row.
There are several attractive benefits and perks at Google. In addition to free food, haircuts, and laundry services, employees have access to a company pool, rock climbing, nap pods, and roller hockey. Also, Google has onsite car washes, oil changes, and massages. The company recently boosted parental-leave policies, according to Fortune, after mothers were leaving at above-average rates. That reduced attrition by 50 percent.

Google has office locations in more than 25 cities across North America. Internationally, the company can be found in more than 50 countries.

3. FACEBOOK

Facebook is the world’s largest social network. As of September 2018, it had 1.49 billion daily active users on average.

Employees ranked Facebook first for culture on Indeed’s rankings. The list pointed to how Facebook treats its employees well, explaining how this is demonstrated in the company’s next large building project. In early 2021, Facebook hopes to complete development on a village complete with 125,000 square feet of retail space and 1,500 units of housing, apart from office space. That innovative plan hopes to create a mixed-use village that integrates needed services with housing and transit solutions. Like Google, Facebook has a number of perks, like arcade games, dry cleaning services, allowance for gym memberships, and for new parents, four months of paid leave and $4,000 of “baby cash,” according to Inc.

Facebook has more than 33,000 employees across 10-plus US and 40-plus international offices.

2. ADOBE

Adobe is a computer software company. Well known for image editing software Photoshop and the Portable Document Format (PDF) file it created, Adobe has several multimedia and creativity products marketed toward digital professionals.
On Indeed’s list of the top tech companies to work for, Adobe was first for work-life balance and ranked highly for benefits, open communication with upper management, and the ability to work on innovative products. That combination of features has earned Adobe high marks on several other lists of best places to work. Some of those include Fortune’s best companies to work for, Glassdoor’s best places to work, LinkedIn’s top companies, and Forbes’ best employers for new graduates.

Adobe has more than 17,000 employees across 30-plus locations worldwide.

1. **SALESFORCE**

Salesforce is a customer relationship management platform located in the cloud. It’s used for sales, service, marketing, and more.

Employees ranked Salesforce first among tech companies for management, pay and benefits, and job security and advancement. Indeed also noted how Salesforce is no stranger to the No.1 spot on its lists. In 2016 and 2017, Salesforce was the overall best company to work for. Fortune named Salesforce the best company to work for in 2018.

Philanthropy is a specific highlight in Salesforce’s culture. The company has a “1-1-1 model” pledging 1 percent of its profit to nonprofits, 1 percent of its equity to nonprofits, and 1 percent of employees’ time to community service. New employees receive seven full days of volunteer time off immediately, according to Indeed. Ana Recio, senior vice president of global recruiting at Salesforce, told Indeed that those seven days are only the start. “There are people who have volunteered over 200 hours,” she added. “People sit on boards, or they volunteer their time and their professional expertise. Sometimes they will give back to their church or to their community, or to little leagues.”

Salesforce has more than 30,000 employees across 50-plus locations worldwide.
Top Locations in the Tech Industry

After seeing some of the top tech companies to work for, you may be wondering about some of the best locations for a computer or IT careers. Where can you earn a good living? What areas have the most opportunities? How does cost of living factor into these considerations?

Personal finance website NerdWallet looked at these questions and analyzed the best cities for tech jobs. The personal finance website calculated a tech jobs score for each of the largest metropolitan areas (populations over 50,000) in the United States.

WHAT US REGIONS COME OUT AHEAD?

While there are some winners, each major region is well-represented in terms of having high-scoring cities for tech jobs.

*see chart on following page*
The West region has six locations in the top 20, including the top-ranked Silicon Valley and the Seattle metro area at No. 3. Just missing the mark is Provo-Orem, Utah at No. 21. Other notables include Denver, Colorado at 25 and Portland, Oregon at 35.

The Midwest region has three locations in the top 20, thanks to Madison, Wisconsin; Columbus, Ohio; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. That’s the lowest of all regions, but don’t underestimate this area for tech jobs. A noteworthy seven of the next 15 locations in the list (No. 21 through 35) are located in the Midwest.

The South region has a leading seven locations in the top 20, including second-place Huntsville, Alabama. The region also claims the highest number of regions represented in the top 10. Joining Huntsville is Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Austin, Texas.

The Northeast region has four locations in the top 20. Leading the pack is California-Lexington Park, Maryland and the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria area that surrounds Washington D.C. Narrowly missing this part of the list are the large Northeast metro areas of Baltimore (No. 26) and Philadelphia (No. 29), and the Hartford, Connecticut metro area lands at No. 27.
TOP TAKEAWAYS AND LOCATIONS

The list demonstrates how bigger is often better in the tech world, and that trend is evident in a couple of different ways.

- The top cities for tech jobs tend to be large. NerdWallet commented on how metro areas with more than 500,000 residents occupied seven of the top 10 areas for tech jobs, as well as 15 of the top 20.
- The stakes are amplified when you consider cost of living and salary at the top of the list. Some of the top cities in NerdWallet’s list are quite pricey, but high salary figures help make up for it. Rent for the top 10 averaged $1,340 but tech salaries averaged $101,118. Compare that with $882 and $75,707, respectively, for all 381 metro areas.

What makes the best cities so attractive? Here’s a quick look at the top 3 cities.


Home to some of the biggest names in tech, like Microsoft and Amazon, the Seattle metro area is a major competitor for some of the best tech talent. According to commercial real estate company CBRE Group, Seattle is the second best tech talent market in North America. That ranking analyzed markets’ depth, vitality, and attractiveness to gauge their competitive advantage and appeal to tech employers and tech talent.

In NerdWallet’s analysis, the Seattle metro area ranked third for tech employees per jobs and fifth for median annual tech salary. Rent is expensive, at $1,325 a month.

2. Huntsville, Alabama

Huntsville can’t compete with Seattle and Silicon Valley in terms of tech jobs and salary, but it has one distinct advantage: rent. No other city in the top 10 comes close to Huntsville’s $785 in median gross monthly rent. The next closet is $947 in rent for No. 5 Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
Don’t overlook the opportunities in tech here, however. Huntsville is home to NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center, which alone employs 6,000 people. CBS named this location the No. 1 fastest-growing tech city in America, noting that it has the third most technical workforce in the country.

1. San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, California

Silicon Valley tops NerdWallet’s list of best cities for tech jobs, as well as most lists analyzing the most attractive cities for tech jobs in the United States and beyond. For instance, it placed first in CBRE’s rankings of best tech talent market in North America. It’s easy to see, given the area’s list of employers, which include Intel, Apple, Google, Facebook, Wells Fargo, Netflix, and Visa.

Although it’s the least affordable metro area in the analysis, Silicon Valley beats out any other metro area for tech employees per 1,000 jobs and median annual salary. NerdWallet’s overall score for Silicon Valley is nearly 20 percent higher than No. 2.

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<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Population</th>
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<td>Huntsville, AL</td>
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<td>California-Lexington Park, MD</td>
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Computer Science vs Information Technology
What Technology Degree Should You Choose?
Ready to Make Your Choice?

PURSUING A CAREER IN COMPUTER SCIENCE/IT

The future is bright for tech jobs across computer science and IT. First, strong salary and job outlook accompany several careers. Then you can consider the additional perks and benefits that are both trending at the top tech employers and becoming standard in the industry. Finally, consider the top cities for tech jobs. You can look forward to a bright future in tech no matter where you are in the country.

It also doesn’t matter where you live for obtaining the education needed for these careers. An online BS in Computer Science or an online IT degree can qualify you for several of the aforementioned careers. In a convenient online format, you can get the strong tech foundation you need for roles like database administrator, software developer, web developer, IT manager, information security analyst, and more. If you already have your bachelor’s degree, you can pursue higher salary potential and more advanced roles with an online master’s in IT.

Concordia
UNIVERSITY-SAINT PAUL

All of these programs from Concordia, St. Paul feature small class sizes with a personal learning environment geared toward your success. Learn from knowledgeable faculty who have industry experience. Get started with CSP today.