

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Formal institutional learning? Or self-taught \(empirical\) learning?](#)

TheNaturalBoy - April 18, 2026, 9:24 pm

As I understand it, having all this knowledge usually requires a certain level of formal education in most cases. HOWEVER, there are also some interesting cases where people with intense curiosity can't resist diving into this field, to the point of becoming obsessed and gaining surprisingly deep knowledge.

How many of you have completed a degree—computer science or systems engineering?
Have you met people without formal training who have an absurd amount of knowledge?
Have you ever met someone with a degree who barely knows anything about what they studied?

C00Lssh - April 18, 2026, 9:31 pm

It really depends which line of field you want to go down. some require one over the other.

TheNaturalBoy - April 19, 2026, 12:55 am

(Apr 18, 2026 09:31 PM)C00Lssh Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) It really depends which line of field you want to go down. some require one over the other.

But do you feel that the world of hacking is really related to those kinds of careers? There could be people who are never interested in it and just stick to their field, and others who studied something completely different and suddenly find themselves here, passionate about hacking haha

Aeowulf - April 19, 2026, 8:13 am

No degree... I started, but stopped as I was already making 6 figures. Did 16 years in Cyber Security before I retired at 34. Experience, action, drive, grit, determination... those matter more than a formal education.

I know people that have gotten their formal education and can't find or keep a job. It doesn't help if the work ethic isn't there.

freestyles - April 22, 2026, 4:22 am

Mixture of both, it's good to be exposed to the content in a formal setting, but excelling at what you like doing requires a lot more self taught discipline.

G Reviews - May 3, 2026, 3:29 am

I've seen this debate play out many times in cybersecurity, and what stands out is how the industry often values demonstrable skills and problem-solving abilities over credentials. While a formal education can provide structured learning and theoretical foundations, the fast-evolving nature of security threats means self-taught individuals with practical experience and a hunger to learn can often outperform those with degrees but no real-world application. The most effective approach I've observed is combining the structured learning of formal education with the self-discipline to continuously explore and practice independently.