

Systems Administrator

Run the servers, accounts and backups a company lives on. Two years of college and hands-on certifications, no degree required.

TYPICAL PAY

\$75,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$44k to \$114k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Offices, data centres, hospitals, universities, managed service pro...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Computer science, math and English. Install Linux on an old laptop and break things on purpose.
- 2 College diploma** 2 to 3 years
 Computer systems technology or a similar IT program: 2 years for a diploma, 3 for an advanced diploma. Look for co-op.
- 3 Certify** During or right after college
 One Linux certification (RHCSA, the Red Hat Certified System Administrator, is the respected one) or one Microsoft certification, depending on the shops you want to work in.
- 4 Help desk or junior administrator** 1 to 2 years
 Resetting passwords, building laptops, then creating user accounts and patching servers. Most people spend 1 to 2 years here.
- 5 Systems administrator** Year 3 onward
 Responsible for servers, backups, identity and security patches. From here the ladder goes to senior, infrastructure lead, or cloud and DevOps (development plus operations) engineering.

Pros and cons

- + Two-year diploma, no degree, real pay by your mid-20s
- + Every organization needs one; jobs in every town with a hospital or school board
- + Clear ladder into cloud and DevOps (development plus operations) roles that pay six figures
- On-call, evening maintenance and the 3am phone call
- Nobody notices when everything works
- Cloud services are automating away some of the routine work

Optional boosts

Cloud platforms. Automation. Virtualization. Security.

Good to know

They have their own holiday

System Administrator Appreciation Day falls on the last Friday of July. It exists because the job is invisible when done well; people only think about the servers when the servers are down.

The exam is a real machine, not a quiz

The RHCSA (Red Hat Certified System Administrator) exam gives you a broken or unconfigured Linux system and a list of tasks. You pass by making it work. That is why employers trust it more than multiple-ch...

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Network system administrator (NOC 22220), wages (updated Nov 2025)

Red Hat: RHCSA certification

Microsoft: Azure Administrator Associate certification

Seneca Polytechnic: Computer Systems Technology advanced diploma

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/systems-administrator>



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