LEARNER WORKBOOK

Learner workbook Modules 1 to 3

Don't just watch. Do the exercises. By Module 3 you will have a decision and a plan.

The free part of Break Into Cybersecurity

Break Into Cybersecurity

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MODULE 1: THE MAP

Your Learning Log

Information is not skill. Skill is not proof. From now on, every time you learn something, ask: **what would evidence of this look like?**

Open a document and call it your Learning Log. Write today's date. Then answer honestly and briefly.

Date: _____

Where am I right now?

Why do I want cybersecurity?

What has stopped me so far?

What useful experience do I already have? Project work, support, audit, finance, development, customers: you are rarely starting from zero.

In ninety days, I want to have evidence that I can...

The method

One path. One hour a day. Ninety days. Document everything.

One hour is a planning target. A hard lab may take several sessions, so record where you stopped and the next question to answer. Ninety days is a first learning cycle, not a deadline for getting hired.

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One hour, done properly

A command without a question is just typing. Use this for every learning session.

STEP	EXAMPLE: LEARNING ABOUT PORTS	MY SESSION
Objective	Understand what a port represents and identify open ports on my authorised lab target	
Prediction	I expect the scan to show services listening on specific ports	
Exercise	Learn the concept and run the exercise. Result: SSH on 22, HTTP on 80	
Interpretation	The target accepts connections on two services. An open port is not automatically a vulnerability	
Next step	Inspect each service and verify what the scanner told me	

Check yourself

Answer without looking back.

1. Why can cybersecurity have strong demand and still be hard at entry level?
2. What are the three stages?
3. How does confidence usually get built?
4. What question do you ask whenever you learn something?

Answers: 1. Demand across the market does not remove competition for junior roles. 2. Information, skill, proof. 3. Through completed experiences that give you evidence you can do it. 4. What would evidence of this look like?

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MODULE 2: THE LANDSCAPE

Five paths, on a normal Tuesday

Forget job titles. Forget salary screenshots. Compare the ordinary work. **Which frustration would you rather own?**

PATH	THE PROBLEM THEY OWN	A NORMAL FRUSTRATING AFTERNOON	BEGINNER PROOF YOU COULD BUILD	MY REACTION
SOC analyst	Which alerts matter?	A queue and incomplete evidence	Short investigation write-up	
GRC and risk	Turning risk into decisions	"Basically fixed", but the evidence is weak	Simple risk assessment	
Penetration testing	What weakness can be proven safely?	Three hypotheses failed and you keep going	Clean, authorised lab report	
Security engineering	What do we change in the system?	A control works on most systems, not all	Small hardening project	
Threat intelligence	What matters for this organisation?	Two credible sources disagree	One-page public-source brief	

When you research a role

Don't start with the title. The same title can hide very different work. Ask:

- → What problem does this person own?
- → What fills the day?
- → What do they have to produce?
- → What kind of pressure comes with the work?

My top two paths: 1. _____ 2. _____

Market reality check

Use the **Market reality check** spreadsheet. Find ten real job ads for each of your top two paths, in the market where you actually want to work. Then write your comparison.

QUESTION	PATH 1	PATH 2
Tasks that keep appearing		
Requirements that keep appearing		
Realistic entry points		
One uncertainty to investigate		

Check yourself: why do job titles make research unreliable? What should you evaluate instead of the highlight reel? What are the four filters? Answers: the same title can hide very different tasks; the ordinary work, the rhythm and the frustration you will own; energy, rhythm, leverage, market.

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Choose one path for 90 days

This is an experiment, not a life sentence. You are making a decision while some uncertainty remains. That is a useful professional skill by itself.

Score your top paths

Use 1 (weak fit) to 5 (strong fit). Write one sentence for each score. The number is not scientific. It makes your reasoning visible.

FILTER	THE QUESTION	PATH 1	PATH 2
Energy	Does the work pull me in enough to keep learning?		
Rhythm	Can I tolerate how the work arrives?		
Leverage	What do I already know that shortens the distance?		
Market	Can I see real demand where I want to work?		

Write your commitment

For the next ninety days, my primary cybersecurity path is _____

Why I think it fits (my hypothesis):

Today's date: _____ My review date: _____

My evidence target. What will exist in 90 days that another person could inspect?

IF YOU CHOSE	YOUR OUTPUT MIGHT BE
SOC	Three documented investigation exercises
GRC	A small set of risk and control documents
Penetration testing	A safe lab and one professional-style assessment report
Security engineering	A hardening project with verification
Threat intelligence	Several short briefs based on public sources

Good enough means: a clear question, the work you did, evidence for your conclusion, a limitation and a sensible next step.

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Plans for the hard days

Good intentions are not enough. Decide now, so you don't renegotiate with yourself every evening.

PLAN	EXAMPLE	MINE
Starting	If I finish dinner on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, then I sit at my desk and begin the next exercise.	
Distraction	If I discover a new certification or path, then I save it to my Later list and continue the plan.	
Recovery	If I miss two sessions, then I resume at the next session instead of rebuilding the plan.	
Getting stuck	If I am stuck for more than thirty minutes, then I write down what I know, check the documentation and ask one precise question.	

Name the obstacle

Don't only picture the success. Write the outcome and what is actually in your way.

What I want: _____

What usually gets in my way: _____

My if-then plan for it: _____

My Later list

Interesting, but not during this experiment. You are not rejecting it. You are postponing it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Before you move on

- [ ] I named one path.
- [ ] I chose a realistic study schedule.
- [ ] I defined an output another person could inspect.

On your review date

Did I enjoy the real tasks? Did I improve? Did I create credible proof? Does the market support this direction? If yes, continue. If not, adjust. Don't confuse difficulty with wrong fit: everything is frustrating when you are new.

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