

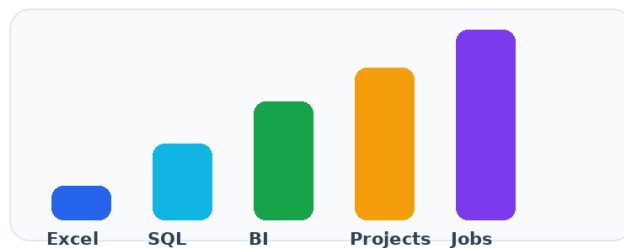
How to Start a Career in Data Analytics

UK Guide for Beginners, Career Switchers and Working Professionals

A practical roadmap to move from no prior experience to job-ready confidence using Excel, SQL, Power BI, business projects and interview preparation.

Data Analytics Career Roadmap

From beginner skills to portfolio-ready evidence



90-day roadmap

Portfolio-first approach

UK evidence-backed insights

A practical starting point for UK data careers

Starting a career in data analytics can feel confusing because job adverts mention different tools, different responsibilities and different experience levels. The strongest beginner strategy is not to learn everything at once. It is to build a clear sequence: Excel, data cleaning, SQL, dashboards, business understanding and portfolio evidence.

This guide gives learners a step-by-step route into entry-level data analyst and related roles. It is designed for people starting from zero, switching careers or upgrading from a non-technical role into a more analytical career path.

£28k-£65k UK data analyst-statistician official salary benchmark	33% Estimated five-year growth for data analysis digital skills cluster	97% AI labour market respondents identifying at least one skills gap
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Evidence that supports this career guide

"Skills in data analysis and statistics can be used in many areas of work." National Careers Service - Data analyst-statistician	"Data analysis will become the fastest growing digital skills cluster." GOV.UK - Quantifying the UK Data Skills Gap
"97% of respondents surveyed identified at least one gap." GOV.UK - AI Labour Market Survey 2025	"Vacancies have decreased by 54,000 (7.1%)." Office for National Statistics - May 2026

The message for learners is clear: the UK market values data capability, but competition means candidates need practical proof of skill, not certificates alone.

Is data analytics a good career path for beginners?

Data analytics is a practical entry point into the technology and business world because it combines problem-solving, reporting, communication and digital tools. Many entry-level roles focus on spreadsheets, databases, dashboards and business reporting rather than advanced programming or machine learning.

A beginner can start by learning how to clean data, ask useful business questions and present insight clearly. Over time, this can grow into business intelligence, data science, automation or AI-related career routes.

Data analytics may fit you if you enjoy:

- Working with numbers and information
- Finding patterns in data
- Solving practical business problems
- Creating reports and dashboards
- Explaining insights clearly
- Improving decisions through evidence

What data analysts do in real jobs

- Collect data from spreadsheets, systems or databases
- Clean and organise messy data
- Write SQL queries to extract information
- Create reports and dashboards
- Track business KPIs
- Find trends, gaps and opportunities
- Explain results to teams and managers

Official role benchmark

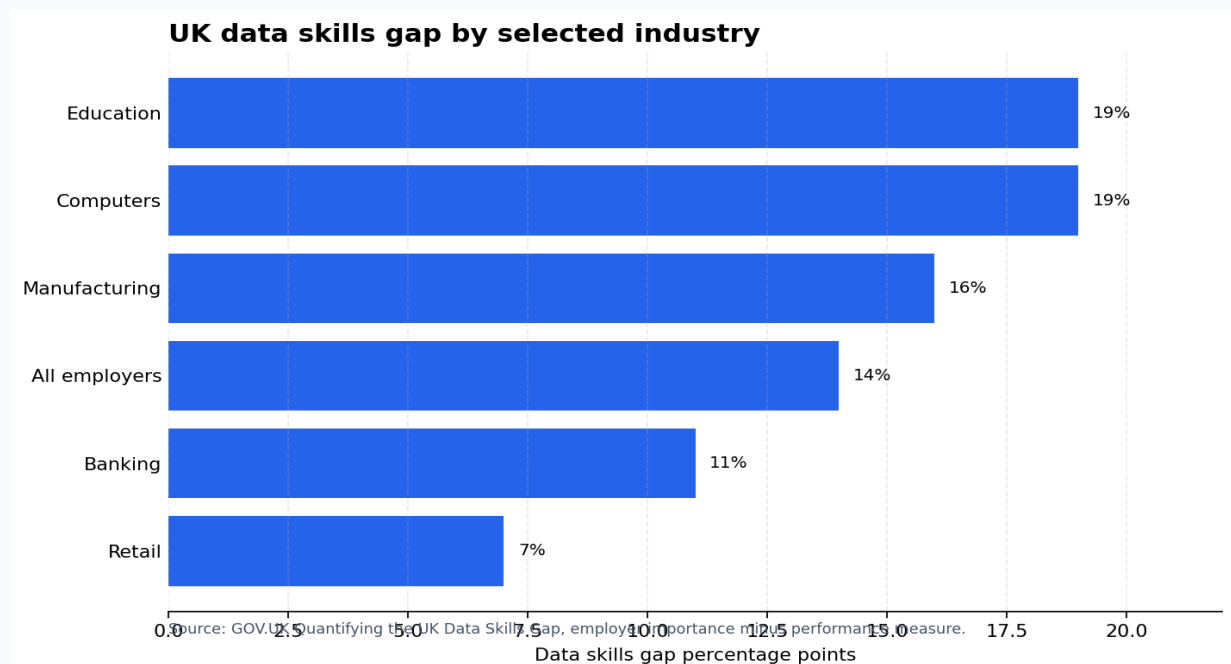
The National Careers Service describes data analyst-statisticians as people who collect data and statistics to identify trends, create forecasting models and help organisations improve services. It lists the salary range as £28,000 starter to £65,000 experienced.

Step 1: Understand the role before learning tools

Many beginners start by jumping into tutorials. A better route is to first understand the business purpose of the role. Tools are valuable only when they help answer a real question.

A beginner data analyst should learn to ask:

- What happened in the business?
- Which numbers changed?
- Why did they change?
- Which department, product or customer group is affected?
- What trend can we see?
- What decision can this analysis support?



The GOV.UK data skills gap report shows that data skills matter across sectors, with visible gaps in areas such as computers, education and manufacturing. This supports the need for practical, work-focused data training.

Steps 2-4: Build the core tool foundation

For most beginners, the strongest starting sequence is Excel, SQL and Power BI. These tools map closely to the daily tasks of many entry-level data analyst and reporting roles.

Step 2: Excel and data cleaning

- Sorting and filtering
- IF formulas
- XLOOKUP or VLOOKUP
- Pivot tables
- Charts and conditional formatting
- Data validation and removing duplicates
- Working with messy datasets

Step 3: SQL for databases

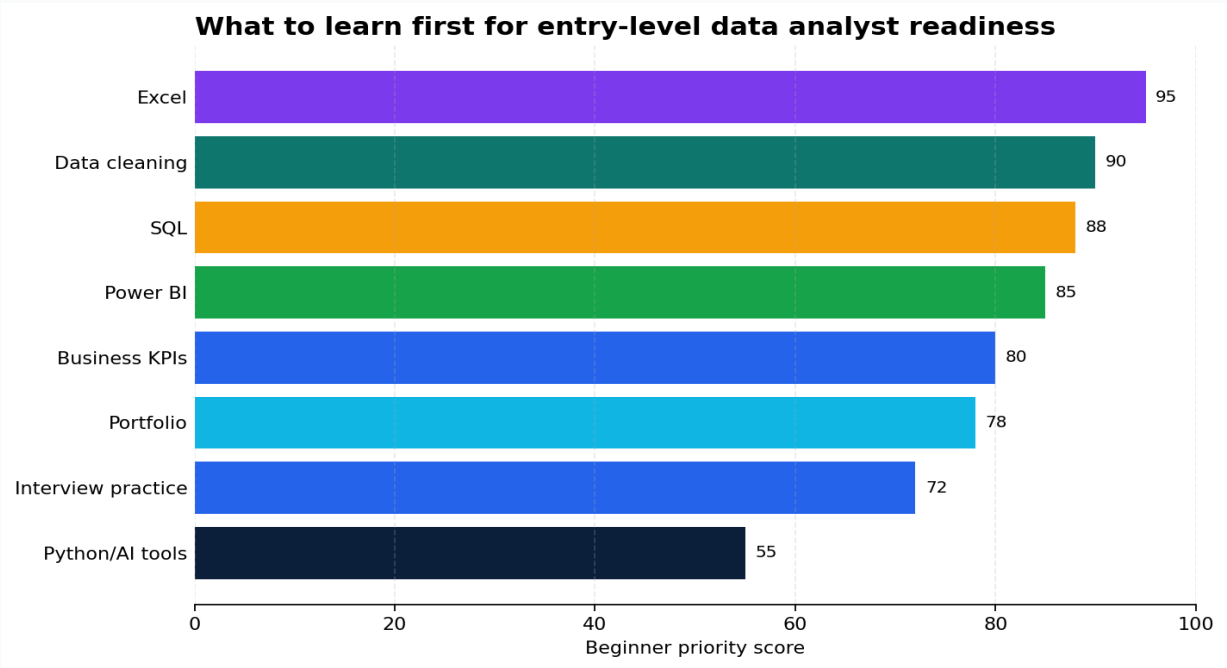
- SELECT, WHERE and ORDER BY
- GROUP BY with COUNT, SUM and AVG
- INNER JOIN and LEFT JOIN
- CASE WHEN
- Date functions
- Subqueries and aggregations by month, product, customer or region

Step 4: Power BI or Tableau for dashboards

- Import and transform data
- Create table relationships
- Build charts, slicers and KPI cards
- Use basic DAX in Power BI
- Design executive dashboards
- Make dashboards readable and business-focused

Step 5: Basic statistics and business metrics

- Average and median
- Percentage change and growth rate
- Trend analysis
- Outliers and correlation basics
- Conversion rate and retention
- Revenue, margin and cost
- Forecasting basics

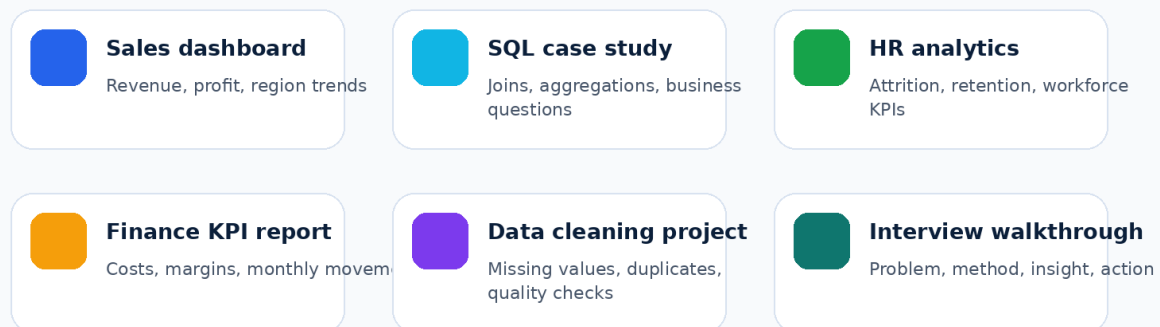


Step 6: Build portfolio projects that show evidence

A certificate can show that a learner completed training. A portfolio shows what the learner can actually do. For candidates without professional experience, project evidence is one of the strongest ways to make a CV and interview stronger.

Portfolio evidence beats generic claims

A strong beginner can show clean data, dashboards, SQL logic and business insight.



Recommended beginner portfolio projects

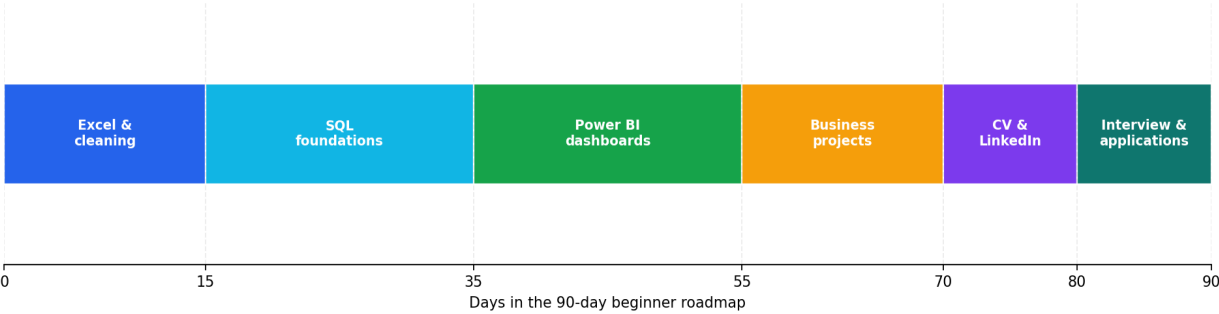
- Sales performance dashboard
- HR analytics dashboard
- Customer behaviour analysis
- Marketing campaign report
- Finance KPI dashboard
- SQL business case study
- Operations performance analysis
- Data cleaning project
- Power BI executive dashboard
- Python data cleaning project

Each project should explain the business problem, dataset used, cleaning steps, analysis performed, dashboard or report created, insights found and final recommendation.

Recommended 90-day roadmap

A beginner does not need to master every tool before applying. The aim of the first 90 days is to create a working foundation, complete practical projects and prepare a profile that can be explained confidently.

Recommended 90-day learning sequence

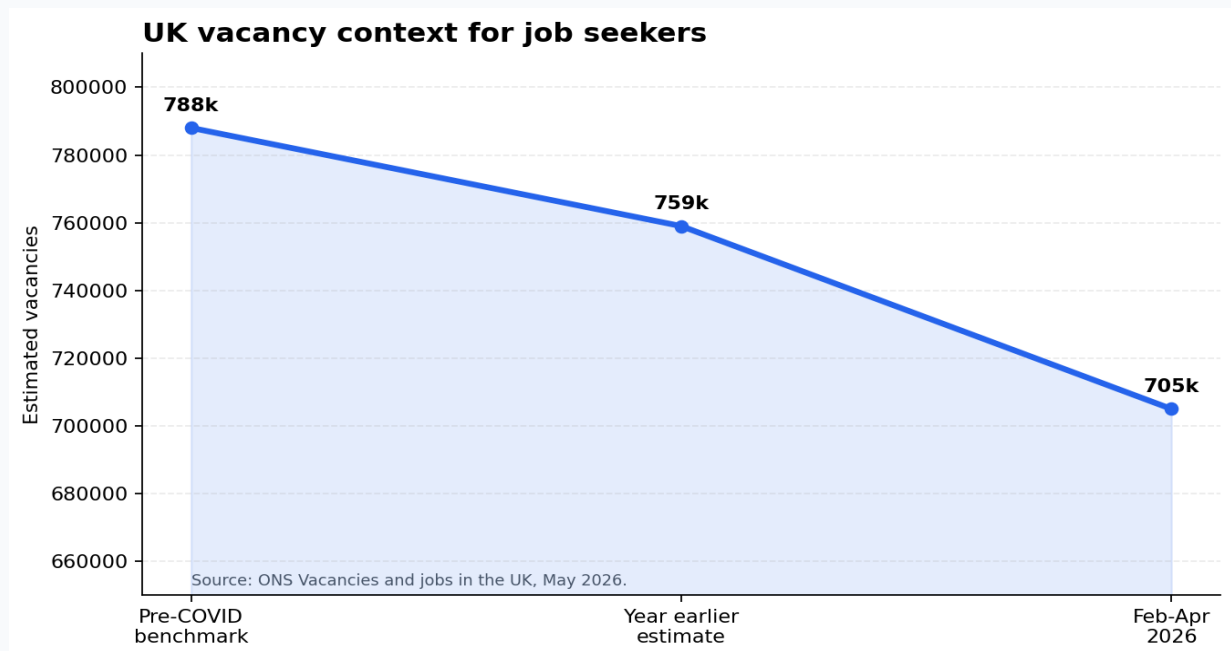


Stage	Days	Outcome
Excel and data cleaning	1-15	Clean messy datasets, use formulas, create pivot reports and basic KPI outputs.
SQL foundations	16-35	Write queries using filters, joins, aggregations and business examples.
Power BI dashboards	36-55	Build a dashboard with KPIs, trends, slicers and clear business storytelling.
Business projects	56-70	Complete two to three portfolio-ready projects from sales, HR, finance or operations.
CV, LinkedIn and documentation	71-80	Turn projects into profile-ready evidence with concise project summaries.
Interview and applications	81-90	Practise project walkthroughs and begin applying to suitable entry-level roles.

Entry-level roles to target in the UK

Beginners often search only for "Data Analyst" and miss related entry points. A wider role search can help learners find realistic opportunities aligned with their current skill level.

- Junior Data Analyst
- Trainee Data Analyst
- Reporting Analyst
- Business Intelligence Analyst
- Power BI Analyst
- SQL Analyst
- MI Analyst
- Data Quality Analyst
- Operations Analyst
- Marketing Analyst
- Finance Data Analyst
- Customer Insight Analyst
- Performance Analyst
- Data Support Analyst



ONS vacancy data shows a competitive labour market in 2026. This does not mean learners should avoid data careers; it means they should prepare stronger evidence - projects, SQL capability, dashboards and clear interview explanations.

Common beginner mistakes to avoid

Mistake	Better approach
Learning too many tools at once	Start with Excel, data cleaning, SQL and dashboards before adding Python or AI tools.
Watching tutorials without building projects	For every major skill, build a small business project or case study.
Making dashboards without insight	Design dashboards to answer a decision-making question.
Ignoring SQL	Practise SQL joins, aggregations and business questions early.
Using a generic CV	Show tools, projects, business problems and practical outputs.
Not practising project explanation	Prepare a clear walkthrough: problem, method, insight and recommendation.

From learning to interview confidence

A job-ready candidate can explain the business problem, method, insight and recommendation.

1

Problem

What business question did you solve?

2

Method

How did you clean, query and analyse the data?

3

Insight

What changed, what mattered, and why?

4

Action

What should the business do next?

Portfolio + practice + clear explanation = stronger interview presence

How to become stronger without prior experience

A learner without professional data experience can still build a stronger profile by replacing experience gaps with visible proof of practical ability.

Show ability through:

- Realistic projects
- Clean dashboards
- SQL case studies
- Data cleaning examples
- Business explanations
- GitHub or portfolio links
- LinkedIn project posts
- Mock business reports

Improve your CV by showing outputs

Instead of writing "Completed Power BI course", write: "Built a Power BI sales dashboard using cleaned sales data, KPI cards, monthly trend analysis and product-level performance reporting."

When should beginners learn Python?

Python is useful, but it should not be the first priority for every beginner. Excel, SQL and Power BI usually provide a stronger starting point for entry-level analyst roles. Python becomes more useful after learners understand data cleaning, tables, business KPIs, SQL queries and dashboarding.

How AI tools are changing analytics

AI tools can help analysts summarise data, draft SQL, explain formulas, document projects, generate dashboard ideas and automate repetitive tasks. However, AI output must be checked carefully. Employers still need people who understand data quality, business context and responsible decision-making.

AI skills context

The GOV.UK AI Labour Market Survey 2025 found that 97% of respondents identified at least one gap in the AI labour market. This supports adding AI tools after the core data analytics foundation is strong.

The Brit Institute learning approach

Brit Institute helps learners move from beginner level to job-ready confidence through a structured and practical learning journey. The focus is not only on tools. The focus is on confidence, project evidence, business thinking and career readiness.

Phase	Learning focus
1. Learn the basics	Data, spreadsheets, cleaning, formulas and simple reports.
2. Learn databases	SQL to extract, filter, join and summarise data.
3. Build dashboards	Power BI dashboards showing KPIs, trends and business performance.
4. Build portfolio projects	Practical projects using realistic business datasets.
5. Prepare for the job market	CV, LinkedIn, project explanation and interview confidence.
6. Keep growing	Python, automation, AI tools, advanced SQL and industry knowledge.

Start your data analytics career with a clear plan

You do not need to master everything before starting. You need the right sequence, consistent practice, practical projects and guidance. A strong beginner becomes job-ready by building proof of skill and learning to explain that proof clearly.

[Explore Data Analytics Programme](#)[Book a Free Career Guidance Call](#)[Download Curriculum](#)

Sources and methodology notes

This guide combines Brit Institute's practical learning pathway with public UK labour-market and careers references. Salary ranges, vacancy conditions and skills-gap figures should be treated as market context, not guarantees of individual employment or earnings.

Source	Used for
National Careers Service - Data analyst-statistician	Official role description, typical tasks and salary benchmark of £28,000 starter to £65,000 experienced.
GOV.UK - Quantifying the UK Data Skills Gap	Evidence of UK demand for data skills, data analysis growth expectations and industry-level data skills gaps.
Office for National Statistics - Vacancies and jobs in the UK: May 2026	Vacancy context showing the competitive wider UK labour market in February to April 2026.
GOV.UK - AI Labour Market Survey 2025 report	Evidence on AI skills gaps and the need for practical education, training and workforce pathways.

Disclaimer

This report is for educational and career guidance purposes. Salaries vary by location, employer, role level, experience, portfolio strength and market conditions. Course participation does not guarantee employment, interview calls or a specific salary.

Brit Institute

Structured, practical programmes in Data Analytics, Power BI, SQL, Python and AI tools for learners preparing for the UK job market.