MNA TECH ACADEMY
LEARN • PRACTICE • SUCCEED

CAREER ROADMAP · 2026 EDITION

Ethical Hacker & Pentester Career Roadmap 2026

A 12-month, portfolio-first path from networking fundamentals to junior penetration testing and red-team readiness.

12	6	3
Months	Portfolio projects	Career gates

MNA TECH ACADEMY
LEARN • PRACTICE • SUCCEED

How to use this guide

Treat this roadmap as a competency plan, not a promise of salary or employment. Demonstrated skill, communication, ethics, consistency, and local market conditions all matter.

> **Professional-use notice:** Security testing must stay within systems you own or have explicit written authorization to assess. Standards summaries are educational aids, not certification, legal, or audit advice.

Inside this resource

01 **Role & Outcome Map**
Know the work you are preparing to perform and the evidence employers can evaluate.

02 **12-Month Learning Path**
Progress through foundations, applied practice, portfolio evidence, and job readiness.

03 **Weekly Operating System**
Build consistency with deliberate practice and visible evidence.

04 **Portfolio Projects**
Create proof of skill without exposing secrets, customer data, or unsafe instructions.

05 **Skills & Interview Gates**
Advance only when you can explain, demonstrate, and document the outcome.

06 **Learning Resources & Next 90 Days**
Start small, measure outputs, and adjust based on evidence.

Role & Outcome Map

Know the work you are preparing to perform and the evidence employers can evaluate.

Security intern

Entry role focused on supervised execution and documentation.

Junior VAPT analyst

Growing role requiring independent investigation and prioritization.

Application security trainee

Engineering role connecting security controls with systems and software.

Junior penetration tester

Specialized role reached through deeper practice and delivery experience.

12-Month Learning Path

Progress through foundations, applied practice, portfolio evidence, and job readiness.

Months 1–2 · Foundations

Linux, Windows, TCP/IP, DNS, HTTP, Python basics, Git, virtualization. Build a small home lab and document every exercise.

Months 3–4 · Web Security

Complete HTTP, authentication, access control, XSS, SQL injection, file handling, and API fundamentals using legal labs.

Months 5–6 · Network Testing

Practise asset discovery, Nmap, service enumeration, evidence capture, remediation, and professional scope discipline.

Months 7–8 · Systems

Study Active Directory concepts, identity, Windows/Linux privilege boundaries, logging, and common misconfigurations in labs.

Months 9–10 · Methodology

Run two end-to-end mock assessments: scope, enumerate, validate, report, clean up, and retest.

Months 11–12 · Employability

Polish GitHub, publish sanitized reports, practise interviews, choose an experience-appropriate certification, and apply consistently.

Weekly Operating System

Build consistency with deliberate practice and visible evidence.

Weekly block	Suggested activity
Concept learning	3–4 hours of focused study and notes
Hands-on practice	5–7 hours in legal labs or datasets
Documentation	One polished diagram, write-up, query, or checklist
Review	Revisit mistakes and create spaced-repetition cards
Community/career	One meaningful interaction, application, or feedback request

Rule: Quality beats streaks. Every practical artifact should show the problem, method, evidence, conclusion, and remediation or improvement.

Portfolio Projects

Create proof of skill without exposing secrets, customer data, or unsafe instructions.

Project 1
Home lab architecture and safety document

Project 2
Web application assessment report

Project 3
Network enumeration playbook

Project 4
Active Directory attack-path diagram

Project 5
Python security utility with tests

Project 6
Capstone assessment and executive summary

Skills & Interview Gates

Advance only when you can explain, demonstrate, and document the outcome.

Foundation gate
Explain core protocols, operating systems, identity, and troubleshooting without relying on memorized tool output.

Practitioner gate
Complete a scoped task, preserve evidence, recognize uncertainty, and recommend an appropriate fix.

Professional gate
Prioritize business impact, communicate to different audiences, handle constraints, and improve team process.

Interview preparation
Use concise STAR examples grounded in your own projects; never claim tools or findings you cannot explain.

Job search
Tailor résumé evidence to role requirements, track applications, request feedback, and iterate monthly.

Learning Resources & Next 90 Days

Start small, measure outputs, and adjust based on evidence.

- PortSwigger Web Security Academy
- OWASP Web Security Testing Guide
- TryHackMe/HTB Academy legal learning paths
- Nmap official documentation

Days 1–30

Baseline your skills, set up a legal practice environment, and finish one small project.

Days 31–60

Complete a focused learning path and publish a sanitized, reviewed portfolio artifact.

Days 61–90

Run a capstone scenario, practise explanation and interview questions, then begin targeted applications or deeper specialization.



Keep learning. Keep building.

Use this guide as a working plan: practise, document evidence, review outcomes, and improve the next iteration.

mnatech.in @mna_tech_academy +91 9216110094

© 2026 MNA Tech Academy. Original educational resource. Product names and trademarks belong to their respective owners. Verify standards and product details against official sources before production use.