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Data Science Career Roadmap 2026

A free step-by-step guide to becoming job-ready in data science —
skills checklist, salary benchmarks, and your 6-step roadmap.

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Your 6-Step Roadmap to a Data Science Career

Data science can feel overwhelming when you're starting out — too many tools, too many opinions on where to begin. This roadmap breaks it down into six realistic stages, with time estimates, so you always know what to focus on next.

1	Build the Foundation Python basics, SQL fundamentals, and core statistics.	4–6 weeks
2	Learn Data Handling Pandas, NumPy, data cleaning, and visualization.	3–4 weeks
3	Move into Machine Learning Core algorithms — regression, classification, clustering — and model evaluation.	6–8 weeks
4	Practice on Real Datasets Kaggle challenges and mini case studies to apply what you've learned.	Ongoing
5	Build a Portfolio 3–4 solid, well-documented projects beat 10 half-finished ones.	3–4 weeks
6	Interview & Apply Mock interviews, resume grooming, GitHub cleanup, and placement drives.	2–3 weeks

Skills Checklist: Are You Job-Ready?

Use this checklist to track your progress. Aim to comfortably check off every item in the 'Core' column before applying for roles.

Technical Skills

- Python fundamentals (variables, loops, functions, OOP basics)
- Data manipulation with Pandas & NumPy
- SQL — joins, aggregations, subqueries
- Statistics & probability (distributions, hypothesis testing)
- Machine learning algorithms (regression, classification, clustering)
- Model evaluation metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, RMSE)
- Basic understanding of Generative AI / LLM concepts

Tools

- Jupyter Notebook / Google Colab
- Power BI or Tableau for dashboards
- Advanced Excel (pivot tables, VLOOKUP/XLOOKUP, formulas)
- Git & GitHub for version control and portfolio hosting

Portfolio & Soft Skills

- 3–4 completed, documented projects on GitHub
- Ability to explain a technical finding in plain language
- Basic domain knowledge (finance, retail, healthcare, etc.)
- A resume tailored to data roles, not a generic template

Data Analyst vs Data Scientist vs Data Engineer

One of the most common questions beginners ask. Here's the difference at a glance:

Role	What They Do	Core Tools
Data Analyst	Cleans data, builds reports & dashboards, finds trends	Excel, SQL, Power BI / Tableau
Data Scientist	Builds predictive models, applies machine learning, tests hypotheses	Python, ML libraries, Statistics
Data Engineer	Builds data pipelines, manages databases, ensures data flows correctly	SQL, Python, Cloud platforms

PAY SCALE

Data Scientist Salary in India — 2026 Benchmarks

Approximate ranges based on current industry patterns. Actual offers vary by company, city, and skill depth — Gurugram-based fintech and consulting roles often sit at the higher end due to GCC concentration.

Experience Level	Approx. Annual Salary (India)
Fresher / Entry-level	Rs. 4 – 7 LPA
2–4 years experience	Rs. 8 – 15 LPA
5+ years experience	Rs. 18 – 30+ LPA

*Figures are indicative industry benchmarks for guidance only, not a guaranteed offer.

Top Tools to Learn in 2026

- **Python**
The primary language for data manipulation, analysis, and ML.
- **SQL**
Non-negotiable for querying and working with real business databases.
- **Power BI / Tableau**
For building dashboards that business teams actually use.
- **Scikit-learn**
The standard library for classical machine learning models.
- **Jupyter / Google Colab**
The everyday working environment for data science.
- **Generative AI tools**
Increasingly expected familiarity, even at entry level.

A note on realistic timelines: for someone starting from scratch, becoming genuinely job-ready takes 4–8 months of consistent, hands-on practice — not just watching videos. Be cautious of any program promising job-readiness in a few weeks.

Ready to Start Your Data Science Journey?

Aptech Learning Gurugram offers a NASSCOM-aligned Data Science & AI program with hands-on labs, real capstone projects, and dedicated placement support — right here in DLF Phase-IV, Gurugram.

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