

Technological Unemployment: A Self-Test

Normal people worry about technological unemployment. Economists keep telling them to relax, but to little avail. You can't trust a coven of eggheads, can you?

Rather than rehash the textbook arguments, let me propose an easy way for the public to test its own understanding.

Step 1: Create a graph where the x-axis runs from 1948 to the present, and the y-axis shows the overall level of technology.

Step 2: Sketch whatever you *personally* believe about the evolution of the overall level of technology during this period. Do NOT proceed to Step 3 until you have finished Step 2.

Step 3: Compare your graph to the actual history of U.S. unemployment from 1948-present. I repeat: Do not peek until you've completed Step 2.

Step 4: If technology were an important cause of unemployment, the two graphs should look a lot alike: more tech, more unemployment. (If you favor the more sophisticated theory that it's tech *growth*, not tech *level*, that raises unemployment, eyeball that instead).

Step 5: So what do your own eyes tell you?