



ACCOUNTANT

JOB DESCRIPTION

Accountants play a vital role in the operation of virtually every business and organization, ensuring that financial systems run smoothly and that tax laws and other regulations are followed. They calculate annual accounts and produce financial reports, and may specialize in other areas, such as fraud detection. Senior accountants may play a strategic role, advising the leaders of a business or organization.



SALARY

Associate ★★☆☆

Senior partner ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Consistent demand for industry professionals • Highest salaries in banking and finance accountancy • Fierce competition for positions in large firms

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Finance • Accounting • Economics • Mathematics • Statistics • Information Technology (IT) • Business studies



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS Applicants can join accounting firms as assistants and learn on the job, or as associates after completing their bachelor's degree.



LIFESTYLE Regular office hours are the norm, although some overtime may be required to complete reports or financial audits to tight schedules.



LOCATION The work is largely office-based. Travel to meet clients and conduct audits—an official examination of accounts—is a vital part of the job.



THE REALITIES Although the financial rewards can be high, evening and weekend work is often required to meet deadlines during busy periods.

CAREER PATHS

There are two main types of accounting: public practice, in which accounting services are provided to clients, and management accounting, in which accountants work in-house for a public- or private-sector organization or business. Career progression may follow a structured path, from accreditation, to gaining experience in different sectors—such as tax or corporate finance—leading to promotion to management, and eventually, partnership in a firm.

INTERN You may be taken on as an accounting intern by a company while you are studying for your accounting degree. This experience may help you find full-time employment as an accountant after college.



GRADUATE With a degree in accounting or a related discipline, you can apply for entry-level positions, which are offered by many large accountancy firms, public-sector organizations, and commercial businesses in all sectors of industry.



▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT** *see pp. 84–85*
- ▶ **ACTUARY** *see pp. 104–105*
- ▶ **ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN** Assists qualified accountants by preparing accounting figures, tax reports, and helping in all other areas of business finance.
- ▶ **COMPANY SECRETARY** Works with a company's senior management to ensure that legal, financial, and regulatory requirements are followed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) employs more than 1,500 accountants to solve financial crime.

SKILLS GUIDE



Excellent numerical skills and the ability to interpret complex financial data.



Precision and attention to detail in order to perform repeated calculations accurately.



Strong communication skills for explaining financial information to clients and senior managers.



The ability to analyze financial problems and identify the most appropriate solution.



Honesty, integrity, and discretion for dealing with sensitive financial information appropriately.

CORPORATE FINANCE ACCOUNTANT

Works in a company's corporate finance division, performing functions such as analyzing accounts to identify money that can be used for growing the business, through acquiring firms or merging existing ones.



TAX ACCOUNTANT Uses extensive knowledge of tax law for businesses to advise clients on their legal obligations and business affairs.

BUSINESS INSOLVENCY ACCOUNTANT

Provides specialized advice to companies in financial trouble, helping them to close their businesses in a controlled manner.



FORENSIC ACCOUNTANT Studies the financial dealings of companies to detect fraud, enabling insurance companies and corporate lawyers to resolve financial disputes.



ACCOUNTANT You will need to pass a number of exams to become a certified accountant. You can then choose to train further to specialize in one area of accountancy.



AUDITOR Reviews the financial accounts of companies and organizations to ensure that they are valid and meet legal guidelines. Auditors may also assess the health of clients' businesses and advise on working practices.