



INDUSTRY OVERVIEW: ACCOUNTING

What Is Accounting?

Accounting involves carrying out the fundamental tasks of preparing, analyzing, and verifying financial documents in order to provide information to clients. Accountants and auditors help to ensure that businesses are run efficiently, public records are kept accurately, and taxes are paid properly and on time. Accounting also provides the opportunity to analyze and influence corporate strategies, evaluate new business opportunities, and develop a wide set of business skills.

Career Tracks

Public Accountants: perform a broad range of accounting, auditing, tax, and consulting activities for their clients, which may be corporations, governments, nonprofit organizations, or individuals. For example, some public accountants concentrate on tax matters, such as advising companies about the tax advantages and disadvantages of certain business decisions and preparing individual income tax returns. Others offer advice in areas such as compensation or employee health care benefits, the design of accounting and data-processing systems, and the selection of controls to safeguard assets. Still others audit clients' financial statements and inform investors and authorities that the statements have been correctly prepared and reported.

Management Accountants: also called cost, managerial, industrial, corporate, or private accountants, they record and analyze the financial information of the companies for which they work. Among their other responsibilities are budgeting, performance evaluation, cost management, and asset management. Usually, management accountants are part of executive teams involved in strategic planning or the development of new products. They analyze and interpret the financial information that corporate executives need in order to make sound business decisions. They also prepare financial reports for other groups, including stockholders, creditors, regulatory agencies, and tax authorities. Within accounting departments, management accountants may work in various areas, including financial analysis, planning and budgeting, and cost accounting.

Internal Auditors: verify the effectiveness of their organization's internal controls and check for mismanagement, waste, or fraud. They examine and evaluate their firms' financial and information systems, management procedures, and internal controls to ensure that records are accurate and controls are adequate. They also review company operations, evaluating their efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with corporate policies and government regulations.

Government Accountants: work in the public sector, maintaining and examining the records of government agencies and auditing private businesses and individuals whose activities are subject to government regulations or taxation. Accountants employed by Federal, State, and local governments ensure that revenues are received and expenditures are made in accordance with laws and regulations. Those employed by the Federal Government may work as Internal Revenue Service agents or in financial management, financial institution examination, or budget analysis and administration.

Requirements/Skills

Academic: By 2009, Colorado, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Vermont will be the only states that do not have any immediate plans to require 150 semester hours of coursework in accounting to sit for the CPA exam. Prospective accounting majors should carefully research accounting curricula and the requirements of any states in which they hope to become licensed.

Skills: Accountants need to have strong math skills, be detail-oriented, and work well with numbers. It is also extremely important to have abilities in analysis, interpretation and business strategy. Excellent communication skills and the ability to work well as part of a team are also highly desired by employers.

Experience: Potential employers expect students to gain experience in business and have exposure to accounting through part-time jobs or internships.

Salary

According to a salary survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, bachelor's degree candidates in accounting received starting offers averaging \$50,500 a year in 2012. The Occupational Outlook Handbook places median pay for accountants nationally at \$61, 690 with the highest earners at \$106, 880.

Associations

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
American Women's Society of Certified Public Accountants
New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants
New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants
Other states also have similar associations

Websites

www.accountingcoach.com
www.aicpa.org
www.careers-in-accounting.com
www.accountingfly.com
www.nysscpa.org
www.njspca.org
www.accounting.com
www.accountingjobstoday.com
www.vault.com
www.turnaround.org
www.nyssa.org
www.locateaccountingjobs.com
www.onlineaccountingdegrees.com

Information was gathered from Vault.com and [The Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)