## What does an accountant do?

The primary task of accountants, which extends to all the others, is to prepare and examine financial records. They make sure that records are accurate and that taxes are paid properly and on time. Accountants and auditors perform overviews of the financial operations of a business in order to help it run efficiently. They also provide the same services to individuals, helping them create plans of action for improved financial well-being.

On the job, accountants:

* Examine statements to ensure accuracy
* Ensure that statements and records comply with laws and regulations
* Compute taxes owed, prepare tax returns, ensure prompt payment
* Inspect account books and accounting systems to keep up to date
* Organize and maintain financial records
* Improve businesses efficiency where money is concerned
* Make best-practices recommendations to management
* Suggest ways to reduce costs, enhance revenues and improve profits
* Provide auditing services for businesses and individuals

## What career paths can I take in accounting?

Usually, accountants and auditors work in offices, although some work from home. Auditors may travel to their clients' workplaces.

Many accountants specialize, depending on their client or clients' type of business and needs. Typical specializations include assurance services (improving the quality or context of information for those in decision-making positions) and risk management. Accountants can also specialize by industry, choosing to work in healthcare, for instance.

The four main types of accountants are:

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| Accounting Career | Job Duties/Degree You'll Need |
| Public Accountant | Their clients include corporations, governments and individuals. They fulfill a broad range of accounting, auditing, tax and consulting duties.  Bachelor's |
| Management Accountant | Also called cost, managerial, corporate or private accountants. They record and analyze the financial information of the clients they work for, and provide it for internal use by managers, not the public.  Bachelor's, CPA |
| Government Accountant | Maintain and examine records of government agencies, audit private businesses and individuals whose activities are subject to government regulations or taxations.  Bachelor's |
| Internal Auditor | They check for risk management of an organization or businesses' funds. They then identify ways to improve the process for finding and eliminating waste and fraud.  Bachelor's, CPA |

Advancement in the field can take many forms. Entry level public accountants will see their responsibilities increase with each year of practice, and can move to senior positions within a few years.

Those who excel may become supervisors, managers or partners. They may also open their own public accounting firms, or transfer to management and internal positions in private firms.

Management accountants often start as cost accountants, or junior internal auditors. They can advance to accounting manager, chief cost accountant, budget director or manager of internal auditing. Some become controllers, treasurers, financial vice presidents, chief financial officers (CFOs) or corporation presidents.

The four main types of accountants enjoy a degree of cross-over potential that is unique in business. They can transition from one type to another throughout their careers.