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# Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks

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## Significant Points

- Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks held more than 2.1 million jobs in 2006 and are employed in every industry.
- Employment is projected to grow as fast as the average due to a growing economy.
- The large size of this occupation ensures plentiful job openings, including many opportunities for temporary and part-time work.

## Nature of the Work

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks are financial recordkeepers. They update and maintain accounting records, including those which calculate expenditures, receipts, accounts payable and receivable, and profit and loss. These workers have a wide range of skills from full-charge bookkeepers who can maintain an entire company's books to accounting clerks who handle specific tasks. All of these clerks make numerous computations each day and increasingly must be comfortable using computers to calculate and record data.

In small businesses, *bookkeepers* and *bookkeeping clerks* often have responsibility for some or all of the accounts, known as the general ledger. They record all transactions and post debits (costs) and credits (income). They also produce financial statements and prepare reports and summaries for supervisors and managers. Bookkeepers also prepare bank deposits by compiling data from cashiers, verifying and balancing receipts, and sending cash, checks, or other forms of payment to the bank. They also may handle payroll, make purchases, prepare invoices, and keep track of overdue accounts.

In large-companies' accounting departments, *accounting clerks* have more specialized tasks. Their titles, such as accounts payable clerk or accounts receivable clerk, often reflect the type of accounting they do. In addition, their responsibili-



*Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks keep records of business and financial documents.*

ties vary by level of experience. Entry-level accounting clerks post details of transactions, total accounts, and compute interest charges. They also may monitor loans and accounts to ensure that payments are up to date. More advanced accounting clerks may total, balance, and reconcile billing vouchers; ensure the completeness and accuracy of data on accounts; and code documents according to company procedures.

Accounting clerks post transactions in journals and on computer files and update the files when needed. Senior clerks also review computer printouts against regularly maintained journals and make necessary corrections. They may review invoices and statements to ensure that all the information appearing on them is accurate and complete, and they may reconcile computer reports with operating reports.

*Auditing clerks* verify records of transactions posted by other workers. They check figures, postings, and documents to ensure that they are correct, mathematically accurate, and properly coded. They also correct or note errors for accountants or other workers to fix.

As organizations continue to computerize their financial records, many bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks use specialized accounting software, spreadsheets, and databases. Most clerks now enter information from receipts or bills into computers, and the information is then stored either electronically or as computer printouts, or both. The widespread use of computers also has enabled bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks to take on additional responsibilities, such as payroll, procurement, and billing. Many of these functions require these clerks to write letters and make phone calls to customers or clients.

**Work environment.** Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks work in an office environment. They may experience eye and muscle strain, backaches, headaches, and repetitive motion injuries from using computers on a daily basis. Clerks may have to sit for extended periods while reviewing detailed data.

Many bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks work regular business hours and a standard 40-hour week, although some may work occasional evenings and weekends. About 24 percent of these clerks worked part time in 2006.

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks may work longer hours to meet deadlines at the end of the fiscal year, during tax time, or when monthly or yearly accounting audits are performed. Additionally, those who work in hotels, restaurants, and stores may put in overtime during peak holiday and vacation seasons.

## Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Employers usually prefer bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks to have at least a high school diploma and some accounting coursework or relevant work experience. Clerks should also have good communication skills, be detail-oriented, and trustworthy.

**Education and training.** Most bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks are required to have a high school degree at a minimum. However, having some college is increasingly important and an associate degree in business or accounting is required for some positions. Although a bachelor's degree is rarely required, graduates may accept bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerk positions to get into a particular company or to enter the accounting or finance field with the hope of eventually being promoted.

## Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks .....	43-3031	2,114,000	2,377,000	264,000	12

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Once hired, bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks usually receive on-the-job training. Under the guidance of a supervisor or another more experienced employee, new clerks learn company procedures. Some formal classroom training also may be necessary, such as training in specialized computer software.

**Other qualifications.** Experience in a related job and working in an office environment also is recommended. Employers prefer workers who can use computers; knowledge of word processing and spreadsheet software is especially valuable.

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks must be careful, orderly, and detail-oriented in order to avoid making errors and to recognize errors made by others. These workers also should be discreet and trustworthy because they frequently come in contact with confidential material. They should also have good communication skills because they increasingly work with customers. In addition, all bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks should have a strong aptitude for numbers.

**Certification and advancement.** Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, particularly those who handle all the recordkeeping for a company, may find it beneficial to become certified. The Certified Bookkeeper (CB) designation, awarded by the American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers, demonstrates that individuals have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out all bookkeeping functions, including overseeing payroll and balancing accounts according to accepted accounting procedures. For certification, candidates must have at least 2 years of bookkeeping experience, pass a four-part examination, and adhere to a code of ethics. Several colleges and universities offer a preparatory course for certification; some offer courses online.

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks usually advance by taking on more duties for higher pay or by transferring to a closely related occupation. Most companies fill office and administrative support supervisory and managerial positions by promoting individuals from within their organizations, so clerks who acquire additional skills, experience, and training improve their advancement opportunities. With appropriate experience and education, some bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks may become accountants or auditors.

### Employment

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks held more than 2.1 million jobs in 2006. They work in all industries and at all levels of government. Local government and the accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services industry are among the individual industries employing the largest numbers of these clerks.

### Job Outlook

Job growth is projected to be average through 2016, and job prospects should be good as a large number of bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks are expected to retire or transfer to other occupations.

**Employment change.** Employment of bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks is projected to grow by 12 percent during the 2006-16 decade, which is as fast as the average for all occupations. Due its size, this occupation will have among the largest numbers of new jobs arise, about 264,000 over the projections decade.

A growing economy will result in more financial transactions and other activities that require recordkeeping by these workers. Additionally, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 calls for more accuracy and transparency in the reporting of financial data for public companies, which will increase the demand for these workers. Moreover, companies will continue to outsource their bookkeeping and accounting departments to independent accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services firms. However, at the same time, the increasing use of tax preparation software in place of the services of tax professionals will hinder growth somewhat.

Clerks who can carry out a wider range of bookkeeping and accounting activities will be in greater demand than specialized clerks. Demand for full-charge bookkeepers is expected to increase, for example, because they do much of the work of accountants and perform a wider variety of financial transactions, from payroll to billing. Technological advances will continue to change the way these workers perform their daily tasks, such as using computer software programs to maintain records, but will not decrease the demand for these workers, especially in smaller establishments.

**Job prospects.** Some job openings are expected to result from job growth, but even more openings will stem from the need to replace existing workers who leave. Each year, numerous jobs will become available as clerks transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. The large size of this occupation ensures plentiful job openings, including many opportunities for temporary and part-time work. Certified Bookkeepers (CBs) and those with several years of accounting or bookkeeping experience will have the best job prospects.

### Earnings

In May 2006, the median wage and salary earnings of bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks were \$30,560. The middle half of the occupation earned between \$24,540 and \$37,780. The top 10 percent of bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks more than \$46,020, and the bottom 10 percent earned less than \$19,760.

Benefits offered by employers may vary by the type and size of establishment, but health insurance and paid leave are common.

### **Related Occupations**

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks work with financial records. Other workers who perform similar duties include accountants and auditors; bill and account collectors; billing and posting clerks and machine operators; brokerage clerks; credit authorizers, checkers, and clerks; payroll and timekeeping clerks; procurement clerks; and tellers.

### **Sources of Additional Information**

For information on the Certified Bookkeeper designation, contact:

➤ American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers, 6001 Montrose Rd., Suite 500, Rockville, MD 20852.

Internet: <http://www.aipb.org>