

Subsectors:	Accountancy	Profession:	Bookkeeping
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Typical job titles
Accounts Clerk, Finance Clerk, Bookkeeper

Description
<p>Every business, large and small, is required by law to 'keep books'. This essentially is the process that documents and verifies every financial transaction. These accounts can be complex beasts, particularly when it comes to finalising end of year business statements and tax returns. Keeping a financial 'paper trail' is much more than just a formality. As an accounts clerk/bookkeeper, it would be your job to ensure that records are full maintained and updated, ready for audit purposes and to smooth the process of filing annual account statements and reports. You might work within a large organisation on a permanent basis, or provide contracted bookkeeping services to companies on a part-time basis. If the latter, you could be juggling numerous clients. Most businesses in today's age are computerised, but the principal of entering income and outgoings onto a ledger remains the same. The role can be diverse. As well as preparing accounts, you might be responsible for administering the payroll, processing invoices and payments, filing VAT returns, submitting paperwork and payment for employer and employee tax and National Insurance contributions and even helping to prepare end of year profit and loss sheets.</p>

Tasks could include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping accurate financial records ▪ Balancing accounts (often known as 'double entry book-keeping') ▪ Raising purchase orders ▪ Processing sales invoices, receipts and payments ▪ Logging and matching supplier invoices to purchase orders raised ▪ Preparing statements, showing the company or department's income and outgoings ▪ Making up wage packets and processing expense claims ▪ Banking money ▪ Issuing and balancing petty cash ▪ Completing VAT returns ▪ Completing tax and National Insurance paperwork, submitting employer payments and forms ▪ General administration and filing of records and statements ▪ Helping to prepare final accounts, such as profit and loss accounts and balance sheets ▪ Giving administrative support to accountants, including assisting with internal audits. <p>Depending on the size of the employer, bookkeepers may also get involved in preparing VAT returns and completing and submitting tax returns. Some may also take on accounts receivable, accounts payable and credit management duties. See separate profiles for details.</p>

Competences: skills and qualities needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PC literate ▪ Comfortable working with numbers ▪ Good spoken and written communication skills ▪ Well organised and methodical ▪ Good attention to detail ▪ Honesty and discretion when handling confidential financial information ▪ Self motivated but equally work well in a team setting ▪ Enjoy solving problems.

Knowledge
<p>An employer will not always require new entrants to this profession to have this knowledge. They will usually provide candidates with training and access to qualifications to acquire technical skills for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting administrative software systems, most commonly Sage, SAP and Oracle • Processing invoices and reconciling accounts, in line with organisations' credit policies • Legislation and regulation of financial accounts being administered • Records required for internal audits. <p>Any previous experience of office work can be useful. Temporary work can be a good route in. Computer confidence is essential, and any experience of using spreadsheets and database packages like Microsoft Excel and Access can be an advantage.</p>

Hours of work

Bookkeeping staff employed on a full-time basis generally work Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Part time, temporary work and job sharing is possible. Quite often employers retain the services of self-employed bookkeepers on a part-time contract basis. Providing the work is done on time and to the required standard, employers are generally extremely flexible with working arrangements.

Typical work environment

You might be based within a large financial team, usually working in an open plan office. As a self-employed or contracted bookkeeper, you may visit clients' premises to work or collect records, sometimes combining this with working from home. As a self-employed bookkeeper, some travel may be required, but it's usually of your choosing.

Minimum Qualifications required to enter role

There are opportunities for adults who are changing careers, school and college leavers, for graduates and for adults who are looking to re-enter the labour market after a career break. Bookkeeping provides many people re-entering the work environment with a flexible working arrangement. It also offers a good introduction to accountancy and wider financial roles, such as accounting technician, credit control and credit management. It may be possible to enter this work through the Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship in Accounting. As with many occupations within financial services, bookkeeping roles can be entered with a vocational qualification. This could be a vocational bookkeeping, finance, accounting or business qualification, such as a BTEC, NVQ/SVQ or specialist Diploma, for example the Diploma in Business, Administration and Finance.

General education:

Bookkeeping staff need to have an understanding of numbers and be able process and correctly document information. It is therefore useful to have GCSEs, Standard Grades or equivalent in English and Maths. Good IT skills are essential.

Professional qualifications:

Before starting a bookkeeping job or in the early stages of your career, it may be worth undertaking a basic accounting or bookkeeping qualifications. There are many bookkeeping qualifications around that give a good foundation knowledge which you can build on, including:

Level 1

- The Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (ICB) Certificate in Basic Book-keeping
- International Association of Book-keepers (IAB) Certificate in Book-keeping (manual and computerised)
- OCR Certificate or Diploma in Bookkeeping
- EDI Certificate in Book-keeping
- City & Guilds (8953) Award in Book-keeping and Accounts

Level 2

- ICB Certificate in Manual or Computerised Book-keeping
- IAB Certificate in Book-keeping (manual or computerised)
- EDI Certificate in Book-keeping and Accounts
- City & Guilds (8953) Award in Book-keeping and Accounts
- AAT Foundation NVQ/SVQ or Certificate in Accounting
- ACCA Certificate in Accounting (Certified Accounting Technician Introductory level, with 2 papers).

Level 3

- ICB Diploma in Book-keeping (manual or computerised) or Diploma in Small Business Financial Control
- IAB Certificate in Book-keeping, Diploma in Accounting and Advanced Book-keeping, Diploma in Computerised Book-keeping, Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting or Diploma in Small Business Financial Management
- OCR Certificate or Diploma in Accounting
- EDI Certificate in Accounting
- AAT Intermediate NVQ/SVQ Advanced Certificate in Accounting
- ACCA Certificate in Accounting (Certified Accounting Technician Intermediate level, with 2 papers)

In most instances, learners are able to design their own flexible learning programme to suit their individual circumstances with access to distance learning correspondence and online courses, or by part-time attendance at one of many centres throughout the UK.

Apprenticeship:

It may be possible to enter a bookkeeping role via the Level 2 Apprenticeship in Accounting or Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship in Accounting. Please see the **apprenticeship** section for more information.

Additional qualifications

Higher Education

There are many progression routes onto learning at a higher level from vocational and professional courses. Foundation degrees in financial services are available which can be studied part time whilst working or full time at a university or college. Those that take the AAT or ACCA training route, can, on completion of Level 4 qualifications, become Certified Accounting Technicians. Attaining a Level 4 qualification would enable you to produce financial reports and assist accountants with internal audits. From this point, you might be able to go on and qualify as a chartered accountant. All the professional accountancy bodies offer fast track routes and exemptions to AAT and ACCA CAT qualified students.

Higher level learning routes which could aid progression include:

- Level 4 AAT Technician NVQ/SVQ or Diploma in Accounting
- Level 4 ACCA Certificate in Accounting (Certified Accounting Technician Advanced level, with 5 papers), leading to ACCA Certified Accounting Technician qualification
- Level 4 IAB Diploma in Accounting to International Standards or Diploma in Financial Information for Managers
- Chartered Accountancy – all the chartered accountancy bodies offer fast track routes and exemptions to AAT and ACCA CAT qualified students
- Level 5, 6 and 7 SQA in Accounting – Intermediate 2
- Level 7 SQA Higher National Certificate and Level 8 Higher National Diploma in Accounting
- Level 7 MSc in Finance and Accounting.

See the individual organisations' websites and the **UCAS** website for more details, as each set their own entry requirements depending on qualifications already held and practical work experience.

Progression possibilities and salary indication

Accounting Clerk/Bookkeeper:	£ Deals with variety of bookkeeping tasks, reporting into a Finance Officer/Accounts Manager.
Accounting Technician:	£ to ££ Same duties as above, but as a part or fully qualified AAT and ACCA accounting technician, would be able to prepare financial reports and assist accountants with internal audits.
Accounts Manager/Finance Officer:	££ - £££+ Usually jobs with a management element, often as qualified accounting technicians or people working towards professional Chartered Accountant status. Possibly with wider credit management and people management responsibilities.

Typical employers

You could work for virtually any type of company in every business sector, or in the public sector for organisations such as local councils, educational establishments like colleges/universities and the NHS. May also be a self-employed bookkeeper for a number of small businesses.

Where in the UK are there opportunities to be employed in this role?

Opportunities exist throughout the UK. Some organisations may have small teams, where your duties will be quite varied, possibly extending with experience to accounts payable/receivable, payroll and credit management. Large administrative and operational centres may have specific bookkeeping, accounting technician and professional roles, whereas in smaller work environments, accounting duties may overlap, and as bookkeeper, you might be the sole person reporting into the financial manager.

Global dimension

Bookkeeping jobs are, in the main, based in the UK. Once qualified, with either AAT or ACCA, it may be possible for accounting technicians to work abroad, as both qualifications are recognised internationally. Once in a more senior position, firms with international reach offer more global promotional opportunities.

What do employers look for when recruiting?

Employers are looking for discreet and honest people with excellent attention to detail. You need to have good communication and organisational skills, be dependable, flexible and confident in your own abilities to maintain accurate records. Computer ledger experience plus good Excel spreadsheet and possibly SAP skills are helpful.

Progression and future trends

There are excellent prospects for people to rapidly progress from basic bookkeeping into aligned roles, like accounts payable and receivable and payroll. In larger organisations you might quickly move into a team leader position. After completing a higher Level 4 qualification with either AAT or ACCA, you'd be a qualified accounting technician. This opens more pathways, including working towards professional Chartered Accountant status. Some may specialise in a particular area, for instance credit management. The Institute of Credit Management offers relevant qualifications. You might also become self-employed, working for a number of smaller businesses giving bookkeeping support and wider business advice.

Related professions

Accounts Payable
Accounts Receivable
Billing
Customer Services
Credit Management
Financial Control
Payroll

Additional links

Association of Accounting Technicians – www.aat.org.uk
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants – www.accaglobal.com
Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies – www.ccab.org.uk
Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (ICB) – www.book-keepers.org
International Association of Book-keepers – www.iab.org.uk
Local Government Careers – www.lgcareers.com
Accounting Technician - AAT
www.lgjobs.com

Salary levels without bonus and benefits package

£ £15,000 to £22,000 per year
££ £22,000 to £30,000 per year
£££ £30,000 to £40,000 per year
££££ £40,000 to £50,000 per year
£££££ £50,000 to £70,000 per year
££££££ £70,000 and over per year