Three letters that could change your future. Hot jobs, super salaries. Can’t wait for college? Don’t.

Where To?
A career in accounting can take you there.
CPA does not stand for City Park Accordionist.

It stands for something with better benefits and fewer hecklers: Certified Public Accountant.

To explore the infinite opportunities in accounting—and all the perks that come with them—visit StartHereGoPlaces.com.
Accountants and Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) make sure every superstar athlete, stand-up comic and dog-walking business down the street stays in the money. They understand what makes businesses tick, and they make the decisions that make organizations run as efficiently and profitably as possible. Do we open an office in Milwaukee or Maui? Hire a summer intern or spring for a full-time associate?

CPAs can be budget balancers, business consultants and call-their-own-shot entrepreneurs. They’re the people who hold the financial keys to big-budget projects and the people who say: Spend your money on this, not that. They’re risk managers, rock star advisors, tax preparers and puzzle solvers. They work for organizations that range from the FBI to the SPCA, from regional surfboard companies to international hotels—basically, any and every gig you can think of.

And they make money. Good money. Especially CPAs. It takes accounting experience, education and yes, passing an exam to go from accountant to CPA. But as CPA and executive director Mary MacBain says, “There is no better brand in the business world than ‘CPA.’”

Why you may find your Future You in accounting.


MORE REASONS THAT THE GOING IS GOOD WITH ACCOUNTING:

You’ll be in demand. Accountants—especially CPAs—are essential simply because every moneymaking body in the world needs them.

You can turn saving the trees into a salary. Or snowboarding into a serious job. Chances are, the stuff you like to do involves accounting. Like we said, every company needs an accountant.

It’s never boring. Waiting for the punchline? There is none. Countless CPAs cite the excitement factor of their jobs as a major perk. Makes sense when you think about it. If accounting were boring, why would millions of people be doing it?

Want to find the accounting job that wows you? Build your FutureMe at StartHereGoPlaces.com
CPAs: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS. AND PAYS.

Let's start with the facts: Employment of accountants and auditors (the ones who know the financials up and down and business inside and out) is predicted to grow by 22 percent* between 2008 and 2018—much faster than the average for other occupations.

Another big plus: Because accountants are in demand, they can command the big bucks. How big? Take a paycheck peek below.

Want to know about more great jobs and the great salaries that come with them? How about what you can expect to be paid as a CPA in Miami vs. Denver? Or an entry-level position vs. head honcho? Check out the $alary $napshot page on StartHereGoPlaces.com.

So what are the hottest jobs in accounting right now?

Business valuation
Businesses are bought and sold all the time. And who determines what they are worth and why? Accountants with Accredited Business Valuation (ABV) credentials. ABV is the leading specialty niche, according to this year's Top 100 Firms report by Accounting Today.

Nonprofit
Good news for do-gooders: According to Accounting Today, nonprofits were the second-fastest growing category of clients. If you want to work for a nonprofit, it's best to work in public accounting first. That way, you'll gain exposure to different areas of accounting.

Liberal arts dual majors
Study modern poetry in addition to accounting? Go for it, says public accounting recruiter Scott McQuillan. Here's what he says about those who major in accounting and something very un-accounting like. “Their mindset is different...and that's something that we're always looking for.”

Tech
What’s technology got to do with accounting? Pretty much everything. Businesses rely so much on technology now, they need accountants to ensure that systems are working smoothly. Also, tech-savvy accountants provide valuable business insight.

CPAs
No matter the industry, no matter the city, CPAs are always in demand. Plus, as Texas CPA Kimberly Dietz says, having an accounting degree without a CPA is like “…having a great thoroughbred horse and never putting it on the track. You’ll never know how far and fast that horse can go.”

Myth:
ACCOUNTING IS AS CREATIVE AS DIRECTING TRAFFIC

Not so, says CFO Jeff Dottl. “The more I have to be creative, the more I enjoy my days at work,” he says. See how Jeff gets the creative juices flowing. Go to Real-Life CPAs on StartHereGoPlaces.com.

* U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics

---

**Payroll Accountant**
Disneiland Resorts: $55,275-$83,050

**Senior Accountant**
National Parks Service: $56,100-$72,325

**Staff Accountant**
Regional Biotech Firm: $44,275-$59,125

**Accounting Manager**
Regional Jeweler: $69,850-$90,200

**Internal Auditor**
Nike: $75,075-$96,250

**Forensic Accountant**
Big 4 Accounting Firm: $73,425-$94,325

---

**TRENDS. Even accounting has them.**

---

---

**Liberal arts dual majors**

Study modern poetry in addition to accounting? Go for it, says public accounting recruiter Scott McQuillan. Here’s what he says about those who major in accounting and something very un-accounting like. “Their mindset is different...and that’s something that we’re always looking for.”

**Tech**

What’s technology got to do with accounting? Pretty much everything. Businesses rely so much on technology now, they need accountants to ensure that systems are working smoothly. Also, tech-savvy accountants provide valuable business insight.

**CPAs**

No matter the industry, no matter the city, CPAs are always in demand. Plus, as Texas CPA Kimberly Dietz says, having an accounting degree without a CPA is like “…having a great thoroughbred horse and never putting it on the track. You’ll never know how far and fast that horse can go.”

---

**Myth:**

ACCOUNTING IS AS CREATIVE AS DIRECTING TRAFFIC

Not so, says CFO Jeff Dottl. “The more I have to be creative, the more I enjoy my days at work,” he says. See how Jeff gets the creative juices flowing. Go to Real-Life CPAs on StartHereGoPlaces.com.
From Good To Greater Good

Jessi Hargis, CPA
CFO of American Red Cross, Central Oklahoma

JESSI HARGIS HAD ALL HER CREDENTIALS. BUT IT TOOK A WHILE TO FIND HER CALLING.

Jessi did everything she thought she was supposed to do. She got her MBA and her CPA credentials. She worked in the corporate world and for one of the Big 4* accounting firms. Still, something was missing. “I wanted more out of life,” she says. That’s when she found out about an opening at the American Red Cross. Today, Jessi is CFO of the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma and “gets to do what I love every day and at the end of the day, know I played a part in helping someone.”

As if being CFO of a huge nonprofit isn’t challenging enough (even if you love your job), Jessi is also helping consolidate accounting for the American Red Cross chapters in Oklahoma and Mississippi. All 27 of them.

HERE’S THE STORY: The American Red Cross has never operated on a single accounting system, not in all its 129 years of existence. Now the American Red Cross is consolidating accounting for all of its nearly 700 chapters, creating 45 Centers of Expertise to oversee the process. Jessi is the leader of one of these centers.

INSTINCTS: Bringing all these chapters onboard is challenging to say the least. “I don’t have an answer book,” Jessi says. “There is not a manual out there for How to Consolidate 27 Systems into One. They didn’t teach some of these things in school. I have to trust my accounting instincts.” She adds, “I did have one of my chapters tell me, ‘Well, if it’s never been done before, it can’t be wrong.’”

REWARDS: As challenging as her job can sometimes be, Jessi says that for her, there is nothing more rewarding than applying her hard-won skills to the greater good. “To me, the numbers are people. When I look at a financial statement, it’s not just income. I see someone who made a Red Cross donation. When I look at the expense side, I don’t just see expenses. I see people who need assistance in their greatest time of need. I feel like I connect the people wanting to help and people needing help.”

Yep, it looks like Jessi is doing all the right things, indeed.

“*What’s the Big 4?* The Big 4 public accounting firms are the biggest names of the accounting world. Large in size and prestige, they are: Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Public accounting firms act like outside consultants to businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Myth: THERE’S ALWAYS A RIGHT ANSWER

Jessi says, “Accounting isn’t always black and white. Sometimes there are multiple answers and you have to choose the best one with the information that you have.”
The next time you’re in a coffee shop and you hear your favorite song, think of Craig Zimberg. He keeps songwriters happy.

Craig works for Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), a company that licenses the public performance of music. Whenever businesses like radio and TV stations, Internet providers, restaurants, gyms and cruise lines play music in the background, they have to get a license from a company like BMI. The company audits them to ensure they are paying the proper royalties—to the songwriters, the composers, the music publishers.

Enter Craig. Craig (a Frank Sinatra fan, for those who are wondering) started out four years ago as the IT auditor for BMI when the company was just starting to develop an Internal Audit department. Today, Craig is the Executive Director of Business Control Solutions and Corporate Security. He’s also responsible for the entire Internal Audit department. And his roles continue to evolve, like a song in the making.

“From my company’s perspective, everything I do is being done for the first time. There is no precedent,” Craig says. That includes developing audit plans and working with departments that may never have had an internal audits group visit them before. It’s all challenging to Craig. In a good way.

To boot, Craig gets to work with lots of creative people in a laid-back atmosphere. “Maybe half the people who work here are songwriters,” he says. “It’s amazing when we do company functions. Co-workers come and perform. It’s a fun musical company and everyone’s passionate about music.”

Craig says his job is a perfect example that accounting presents plenty of opportunities beyond what you might think. Take IT auditing, for instance. “It’s a component of every financial audit, making sure that the IT controls that produce the financials are sound.” Craig says that IT auditing is sometimes overlooked in college but super valuable in the real world. “Someone who can bridge between the IT department and business and find solutions, that’s a huge plus and a huge opportunity.” Someone who helps the company work in harmony, you might say. Craig ought to know.

Craig says it just takes a fundamental understanding of how IT works. Then, if you can apply the business skills you learned in accounting, you’ve got the best of both worlds.
A college student takes on the real world for a day.

I've always heard that the real world is nothing like school. So when I realized I wanted to get my CPA, I decided to take my learning beyond the classroom. I recently had the chance to do a job shadow during Ernst & Young's (E&Y) Nashville Summer Leadership Program.

I met a lot of people from E&Y's Nashville office, and we talked about their responsibilities, current projects and the things I would do if I become an intern or employee. It was exciting to visit a company that makes billions of dollars every year, and I really enjoyed learning about career development as well as all the opportunities public accounting has to offer.

Job shadowing is all about helping discover your comfort zone. I'd encourage anyone interested in learning more about a career to do a job shadow. Job shadowing lets you compare your expectations to reality, gain a better understanding of the career you'd like to pursue and connect the classroom to the real world.

What's the worst that could happen? You might find out that the job you thought you wanted isn't right for you. That's a small price to pay when you have the chance to discover your dream job!

Job shadows do not always have to be at large Fortune 500 companies. A lot of organizations offer job shadow programs, so they're not too hard to find. You can also talk to your teacher or contact your local chamber of commerce, state CPA society or the AICPA to learn about programs in local areas. For example, there's a great program in my state sponsored by the Indiana CPA Society called Game On: CPAs in Action. This program gives Indiana high school students opportunities to learn about the CPA profession.

CPAs SHARE THEIR TWO CENTS

“No high school student, no matter what their circumstances, should ever think their path in life has already been set. I worked three jobs to pay for college and took out loans to make it happen. And I still went on spring break.”

Emily Kliethermes, CPA, Comptroller
Missouri Republican State Committee, Jefferson City, MO

“At one internship, my boss told me ‘the ones controlling the numbers are the ones that make the decisions.’ I didn’t believe it at first—after a while I realized she was right.”

Lukas Schmid, CPA, Senior Business Analyst
M. Bohlke Veneer Corporation, Fairfield, OH

“I worked the assembly line for General Motors and started community college. That led to a scholarship, which led to Ernst & Young, which led to numerous jobs in various industries.”

Jeffery Hill, CPA, Chief Financial Officer
The Youth Connection Inc., Bloomfield Hills, MI

“Take some time and think about what you enjoy. Feel free to contact professionals who excel in the field you’re interested in. Most will welcome you as a job shadower and will love to give you advice.”

Magen Smith, CPA, Accountant
Broussard, Poche, Lewis & Breaux, New Iberia, LA

“It’s not about what your salary will be at your first job—it’s about what your ultimate goal is, and then crafting a long-term plan to achieve that goal.”

Robert Laux, CPA, Senior Director of Financial Accounting
Microsoft, Redmond, WA
A Day in the Life of Dan Wagner

To get a feel for Jessica Nguyen's college life, you have to go back to high school. That’s when her love of accounting started.

In her sophomore year, Jessica’s teacher introduced her class to income taxes. Jessica found it “fascinating.” She later attended a seminar with the Seattle Accounting Career Awareness Program where she learned about all the different accounting industries. She says her early introduction to accounting played a huge role in the classes she took, clubs she got involved in and people she met.

Jessica attends the University of Washington, Seattle (she plans to graduate with a degree in business in 2010). She says the best adjective to describe the accounting program at UW is intense—more so than other majors. A typical day for Jessica: classes, working (babysitting and later, internships), studying and more studying, and a little downtime too. “I joined different organizations like Beta Alpha Psi and that was a huge social thing and really made the accounting program richer for me.”

Along the way, Jessica has also learned two very valuable life lessons. One about time management: “College has taught me a very humbling lesson: I can’t do everything.” And two, her learning style: “I wasted a lot of time and energy trying to study in a way that wasn’t effective for me.”

More real-world insight came from a mentor who gave Jessica career advice, helped her simplify accounting concepts and more. Jessica says if you can get a mentor, do. While it’s helpful for college students to advise one another, “it’s a little bit of the blind leading the blind. We don’t realize in the work world it’s totally different.”

Jessica’s favorite part of college? “The people I’ve met, hands down. They have had a huge impact on forming me as a person.”

If you ever want advice on getting a degree in accounting and finance, snagging a scholarship, landing a job with one of the Big 4 and working toward your CPA, you might want to talk to Dan Wagner. But not now. He’s busy.

Dan is preparing for the financial portion of the CPA exam. So a typical day for Dan begins—and ends—with studying. Four to five intense hours of watching CPA review lectures, reviewing notes, taking practice exams, answering hundreds of review questions. And trying not to give in to non-CPA distractions. Just a few months from now, Dan starts a job as staff auditor for Ernst & Young.

Dan has a lot going on. But there’s nothing new there. In college, Dan was the accounting club president for the 2009/2010 year. He was also busy as the Student Ambassador for the Pennsylvania Institute of CPAs, promoting PICPA events, membership and scholarships. Oh, and he happened to earn one of those scholarships, too.

Dan also managed to fit in two accounting internships, one with a large health care provider and another with a small nursing homes company, both of which provided real-life experience.

To those pursuing accounting and a CPA license, Dan recommends getting involved in school activities, meeting professionals, gaining experience through internships and setting goals. He’s already reached one big goal, working for a Big 4 firm after college. As for the others, well, he’s working on it.
Hey! How Much Do You Make?

by Noel Abdur-Rahim, CPA, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (Detroit, MI)

If you’re trying to introduce yourself to a CPA, starting the conversation by asking about salary is not the best approach. I know you are wondering...then how? Lucky for you, I’ve provided some quick do’s and don’ts when approaching a CPA (since I am one myself).

DON’T:

Perform your favorite handshake combo “Hi Five [slap], Up High [slap], Down Low...Too Slow.”

You want to make sure that you have a firm professional handshake. It’s definitely worth practicing your handshake before you approach a CPA.

Name drop.

Every CPA is important, no matter the level. Get to know the individual that you are talking to first, there’s no need to highlight the connections that you may have.

Ask for a business card and run.

Networking is meant to engage conversation and build relationships. If you ask for a business card without any dialogue, you won’t have a memorable fact/circumstance to discuss in your follow-up communication.

Be afraid.

CPAs are excited and ready for students to break into the profession. We love our careers and want to share the benefits of being a Certified Public Accountant.

DO:

Dress professionally, with minimal accessories. That way, all the attention is on your conversation and not what you are wearing.

Smile.

Have you ever noticed that everything is easier when you smile?

Be yourself.

Contrary to past stereotypes, CPAs have personalities—great ones! They love sports, art, music, reading and anything else you can think of. Modern-day CPAs bring their “authentic selves” to work every day and so should you.

Make eye contact.

When a person makes eye contact, it is a sign of preparation and confidence. Even if you’re nervous, maintaining eye contact will portray poise to a CPA.

Start exploring

AP and CLEP
collegeboard.com

Academy of Finance
naf.org

Careers and Colleges
careersandcolleges.com

Central Carolina Community College
cccc.edu/highschool

More ways to get ahead of the pack: Join organizations like Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Business Professionals of America (BPA). They’re great resources for leadership training, networking and internship opportunities.

Get prepped for college by getting a head start in high school. It will make navigating college that much easier.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Want to earn some serious extra credit? Look for high school courses that prepare you to take exams through CLEP. Pass the CLEP, and you may request to be waived from a comparable course in college. You’ll not only save big on college tuition, you’ll earn three to 12 college credits.

Advanced Placement (AP)

Same principle as CLEP. Pass the AP course final exam, and you’re three or four college credits ahead of the game.

Learn and Earn Online

Log on to more than Facebook. Earn high school and college credits by enrolling in online classes.

Academy of Finance (AOF)

AOF not only prepares you for a job in the banking, finance, financial planning and accounting fields, it can help bankroll your education. A three-year program, AOF offers business courses, a course where you can earn college credits, a paid summer internship and access to national scholarships.
Choosing the Right College

Even after your GPA and SAT scores make the grade, choosing the right college can be tough. Do I pick a campus close to home or near the slopes? Would I rather stand out in a small classroom or blend into a big lecture hall?

**STEP 1** Start by creating your wish list for the perfect school. Be sure to include things like location, size, majors and tuition. Don’t forget scholarship and financial aid opportunities, too. Then, put on your Sherlock Holmes hat, do a little research and see which schools offer the best fit. Make sure your list includes at least one school that you’re confident you’ll get into.

**STEP 2** Next, take a campus tour. Attend an open house or at the very least, take a virtual tour. Some schools may look great on paper, but don’t click in person. Check out the dorms, libraries and student unions to see if you can picture yourself there. From there, narrow your list to four to six choices. Application fees add up in a hurry.

**STEP 3** Now it’s time to find your inner Hemingway as you write knock-out essays. Be sure to stick to the word limit—the admissions office can spot an extra syllable a mile away. Also, have a parent or teacher read over your essays and applications to make sure they reflect the gifted, spell-checking person that you are. Finally, wait for the acceptance packages to arrive. Talk to friends and family for advice and support. Then, make your pick. Remember: Whether you decide to become a Bulldog or a Buckeye, it has to be a decision that’s right for you.

**DON’T CHOOSE A SCHOOL BECAUSE...**

- Your bestie can come visit once you’ve settled in.
- You saw a cute on your campus tour. Chances are, you’ll never see them again.
- It’s 20 hours away from home. Mom and Dad will find you no matter where you are.

So what’s the plan once you get into college? Find out at StartHereGoPlaces.com
5 financial aid must-reads

Don’t rule yourself out. You could be walking away from money that is rightfully yours if you don’t apply for aid. There are many factors beyond income that determine aid eligibility. Plus, applying with FAFSA is free—you have nothing to lose.

Don’t hit the snooze button. The earlier you start, the more money you are likely to get.

Get organized. Keep track of your scholarship entries and your financial records. Compare financial aid awards as they come in.

Apply. And reapply. Think about how you will pay for your entire degree. If you want to get aid for every school year, you will have to reapply. Plus, keep in mind that your financial need may vary each year that you are in school.

Check with your colleges of choice to determine the average amount of financial aid they award incoming students. At the very least, check if they guarantee to meet your need.

Free Money, Anyone?

Hurry. It goes fast.

Tuition, dorm rooms, textbooks, all that pizza—it adds up. Fortunately, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships and financial aid just waiting for worthy applicants like you. But it is not a bottomless well. Funding runs out and scholarships have deadlines. If you want to hop on the funding train, don’t wait to make your move.

Start by filling out a FAFSA, a Free Application for Student Federal Aid, a must for federal aid including grants, college work-study programs and loans. Know that most states and schools also use FAFSA information to award their financial aid. For more on FAFSA, including instructions on completing the form, visit fafsa.ed.gov.

Try to score on scholarships. There are a slew of them out there and they come in all shapes and sizes. Planning to major in our favorite field? Apply for scholarships just for accounting majors. Are you a full- or part-time student? Free money could be in your future. Planning a career in government? The feds might give you a financial hand. The list of scholarships goes on and so do the funds.

Myth:

MONEY IS THE ONLY FACTOR IN DETERMINING FINANCIAL AID

Not true. In fact, more and more funding is going to students with academic talent. All the more reason to show your stuff in high school.
Many colleges offer accounting. Are some better than others? Will my college choice affect my job prospects?

First, start your research of educational institutions early. Then consider:

1. **Quality** - At a minimum, look for a business program with a quality nationally recognized accreditation. An accounting program with a nationally recognized accreditation is a plus.

2. **Cost** - Be reasonable with what you can afford. Better to get a degree from a lower cost school than have no degree at all. Ultimately, your dedication, work ethic and career commitment will be more important than the prestige of the educational institution.

3. **Fit** - Pick an educational institution that fits your personality and values.

This approach will most likely lend itself to picking the college that is right for you.

---

If you could have any job, would you still be a CPA?

Yes, I would still be a CPA. I absolutely love business, so any job I would have would be in some field of business. I know you probably have already heard this, but accounting is the language of business. So, having the CPA designation means that you are a business expert. One of the strengths of being a CPA is that no matter what you plan to do in the business world, having your CPA will be relevant for assignments. That’s because the CPA means that you know fundamentals about business finances and all businesses want to make money.

**Ebonie Jackson, CPA**  
Global Financial Standards Implementation Leader  
Owens Corning  
Rockford, IL

Are there accounting jobs that don’t require you to sit at a desk all day?

Just a couple of the things that I have run into during my career:

1. A job as a CPA firm staff accountant or company internal auditor can be very exciting, because it can take you out of the numbers and into the inner workings of your company or clients. For these, you usually get to travel to different locations. You finally get to see that machine that costs $2 million on the books and how it helps generate revenue.

2. There are many times when you will be away at client meetings and building relationships. This is a very important and rewarding part of my job.

There are many more opportunities out there to be seen, I’m sure!

**Julia Stoy, CPA**  
Senior Auditor  
Ernst & Young  
Raleigh, NC

---

Glad You Asked.

Answers to those burning questions you have about accounting. To see more and even ask a few of your own, check out the Ask a CPA page on StartHereGoPlaces.com.

Who’s the Future You?

The possibilities are exciting...and endless. Want to find the future title that fits you perfectly?

**Build your FutureMe** at StartHereGoPlaces.com.
Headed to college?
Check out ThisWayToCPA.com