

How to survive your first year as an accountant

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You've spent three years studying and the time has finally arrived. You're about to go out into the world and spend your first year working as an accountant. While this is an exciting time, it can also be a little daunting. After all, the university has equipped you with all the theory you need, but the real world can be unpredictable.



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Here are a few things to remember that you may not have learned in accounting theory.

People skills are important

Accountant skills, like knowing everything there is to know about auditing, macro-and micro-economics, cloud computing, and cloud software, are important. But people skills are just as important. When you go for your first interview, start your new job, sit in the office every day or engage with your new colleagues remotely, you'll need to use these skills to impress, communicate, and problem-solve.

Remember your future manager or employer will be assessing your soft skills in the interview. They'll be looking at things like eye contact, how you hold yourself, your self-awareness, and the ability to engage in a professional conversation.

It's also important to remember that you'll be part of a team. You're going to work with many people of different cultures, religions, and races – possibly spread throughout the world – so it's a good idea to learn about them, where appropriate. This fosters mutual respect and that's excellent for a healthy working environment.

Never stop learning

Over half (56%) of respondents to the research believe that accountants joining the profession today need financial business advisory skills such as cash flow and growth modelling. With the majority of the accounting function being handled by automation technologies, you'll have more time to focus on developing complementary skills that will make you stand out in a crowded market.

Get into the habit of learning all the time. Your degree is just the starting point. Never stop asking questions and learning new things. Being open to continuous personal development will help you when you:

- Complete onboarding programmes to learn about your new firm's cultures and procedures,
- Meet new colleagues, and
- Learn new cloud-based accounting and business management software.

Embrace this time. Take it all in. Very often you'll be required to learn on the job. Even experienced accountants can learn something new. Embracing the unknown is a vital part of your skills development in the new world of work.

Ask questions

You're new at this and therefore not expected to know everything. This is the perfect time for you to ask questions and find out everything you need to know from people to experience.

What's more, your boss and colleagues will expect you to ask questions. They were once in your position, so it's a good way for you to earn respect and learn from – and avoid – their mistakes.

See your performance reviews not as criticism of your work but as an opportunity to understand where you can improve. Keep a list of all the things you're learning – and all the things you want to learn – so you can get better progressively at what you do.

Manage your time

People often start their careers and work until they burn out. Make sure you're prepared for what your new life throws at you:

- Your first busy season will be challenging. Prepare for it so you can use your time wisely.
- Make sure your family and loved ones understand that this time of year is particularly stressful and that you'll need their support, but it's only for a short period.
- Don't neglect your health. Nutrition and exercise must always be a priority, no matter how busy you get.
- Schedule holidays and rest time so you can recover and spend time with the people you love.

A final word

This is a new and exciting time in your life. Your career is starting. Go out there and show off what you've learned while being open to continue learning. Take each day as it comes, learn from every opportunity that arises, and help people where you can.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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