



Job Preview – Accounts Receivable and Payable Roles

An essential activity of all types of businesses large or small is keeping track of “money coming in”, and “money going out”. Invoicing customers for goods and services they have received, and processing their payments in a timely fashion helps ensure cash flow - and similarly - making payments to suppliers for goods and services they have provided helps maintain great relationships with vendors and contributes to the smooth operation of a business.

This job preview focuses on the role of individuals who perform these important “back-office” activities, commonly referred to as Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Clerks. We’ll be highlighting some of the key tasks performed, as well as some of the challenges of these roles, to help you gain a better understanding about these important positions.

Accounts Receivable Clerks are responsible for ensuring that all incoming payments for goods and services provided by a business are promptly processed and recorded. Tasks include matching payments received against invoices on file, posting them in a general ledger or related computer application, and balancing the ledger regularly to ensure accurate accounting. Maintaining collection files and following up on delinquent accounts are also important duties of this position. Other responsibilities include preparing bank deposits, running reports, and responding to both internal and external inquiries.

The role of an Accounts Payable Clerk is similar to that of an Accounts Receivable Clerk, except that instead of receiving payments from others - you are responsible for making them to vendors and suppliers for goods and services they have provided to the business. Key tasks include processing payments on time to prevent interest charges, monitoring and controlling business expenses by reviewing invoices, keeping track of transactions with vendors, and verifying balances owing.

Other responsibilities include recording expenses to appropriate projects or cost centers, processing expense reports, analyzing accounts, and preparing monthly reports. Occasionally, you may also have to issue stop payments, update purchase orders, and perform other administrative duties to support the accounting department.

The work performed by an Accounts Receivable or Accounts Payable Clerk typically occurs in an office environment during weekday hours. Both involve professional interaction with others in-person, by e-mail and over the phone. Activities are routine and repetitive with clearly defined rules and expectations, and tasks are precise and logical, with a clear beginning and end.

There are also some challenges related to these positions. The work can be time sensitive - and good communication and strong organizational skills are essential. Attention to detail is important, and you will be required to problem solve and notify your manager of any issues or discrepancies needing further action. Interactions with both customers and vendors can also be stressful if there is a dispute over an amount owed, or there are delays in payment.

Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Clerks perform activities that are essential to the day-to-day operation of any business. The roles exist in a wide variety of businesses and industries – ranging from small, family owned companies to large, international corporations.



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The skills you develop in either position could be applied to other accounting roles such as a Payroll Clerk, or a Controller, or you might consider growing and advancing your career by pursuing certification as a Bookkeeper, Accountant or Auditor.

If you like working independently, are good with numbers, enjoy doing data-entry, and have a basic understanding of bookkeeping and accounting skills, the Accounts Receivable or Accounts Payable Clerk position may be a great fit for you and worth exploring further!