

This guidance was issued by the CCAB - the collective voice of the UK profession

Choosing an accountant or tax adviser

Tips on how to choose the right accountant/tax adviser for you or your business

It is important to choose your accountant/tax adviser carefully. Here are a few tips to help you.

If you have not used an adviser before you should be aware that anyone can call themselves an accountant/tax adviser whether or not they are professionally qualified.

There are some non-qualified advisers who may have the experience to help you but qualified accountants/tax advisers have completed relevant qualifications and will be regulated by their professional body.

Professionally qualified advisers will have achieved a qualification comprising knowledge, work experience and ethics. They keep their skills and knowledge up to date through continuing professional development and make an annual statement to their professional body that they have done so. They are also required to hold Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Some of the professional bodies who can help you find an accountant/tax adviser are:



[Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales](#)



[Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland](#)



[Association of Chartered Certified Accountants](#)



[Chartered Accountants Ireland](#)



Chartered
Institute of
Taxation
Excellence in Taxation

[Chartered Institute of Taxation](#)



[Association of Accounting Technicians](#)



Practical Tax People
Association of
Taxation Technicians

[Association of Taxation Technicians](#)

What to look for in an accountant/tax adviser

- For tax advice, check that the firm has the expertise to provide the type of advice you are looking for
- If you are in business, look for a firm of an appropriate size and with other business clients of a similar size to your business. They are likely to understand the issues and problems you will face.
- Do you want them to have experience of advising clients in the same trade sector as your business?
- Do they provide all the services you require? If you need audit, investment or insolvency advice make sure that the accountant is authorised to undertake that work.
- Do they have a good reputation?
- Will they be acceptable to third parties e.g. finance providers, shareholders?
- What qualifications do they have? Are those qualifications appropriate for your particular needs? Do they have professional indemnity insurance?
- Would you be able to contact or meet them as often as you wanted?

Making contact

- Invest time in finding the right adviser. Take a look at websites and make sure that a prospective adviser offers the services you need.
- Contact a few firms and arrange to meet with those on your shortlist. That way you should get a feel for how you would be able to work with them.
- If you are planning to start a business or if you have had communications with HMRC let your prospective adviser know.
- If you are starting a business tell them about the accounting records you keep. Can they suggest improvements?
- Check whether they offer the services you will need as your business develops.
- Find out who in the firm would be doing your work. It may not be the adviser you meet on your first appointment.
- Check in advance whether the first meeting is free of charge; specific advice may be chargeable.

Charges

- Establish the basis of fees and when they will be payable. Ask for an estimate.
- The adviser may want to see your accounting records if business accounts are to be prepared. There will be additional charges for services such as preparing VAT returns or running a payroll.
- How much would the adviser charge to help you compile a business plan? If you already have one ask them to comment on it.
- Remember that you may be able to minimise charges by doing some of the work yourself. Ask the adviser about this at the initial meeting.
- If you are thinking of buying a software package discuss the options with the adviser because the purchase of a compatible product could save the adviser's chargeable time and your fees.

After appointing your adviser

- You should receive a letter setting out what your adviser will (and will not) do for you and the terms of the engagement
- Your adviser should keep in touch, not just contact you at the year-end. You should tell your accountant /tax adviser as soon as possible of changes in your business or personal circumstances
- After the annual accounts or tax return have been prepared your adviser will let you know what your future tax liabilities will be.
- You should also let your adviser know if you are considering retirement, selling or giving away an interest in your business
- Review your adviser's charges regularly and check that they are still providing the services you need.