



JA My Way™

JA My Way Discussion Guide

Introduction:

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and Junior Achievement (JA) have partnered on the Finance and Accounting career cluster of JA's student site, JA My Way (JAMyWay.org). This discussion guide is meant to be used with high school students in one classroom session (about 45 minutes). If you would like to set up a session through Junior Achievement, contact your local JA office by going through the "Locate a JA Office Near You" function on JA.org.

Things to Consider:

Many high school students have heard of accounting, but may not have a clear idea of what an accountant or CPA does. Often students' perceptions of careers are determined by what they see and hear through mass media. Because of this, perceptions about accounting may range from a total lack of knowledge to the negative. The goal of this activity is to introduce students to the accounting profession in a way that helps them better understand what an accountant does, and the benefits of a career in accounting.

Your Story:

Start off your session by introducing yourself to the students. Tell them a little bit about your journey in the accounting industry. Points to discuss include:

- What inspired you to pursue a career in accounting?
- Describe the steps of becoming a CPA and the importance of becoming certified.
- What kind of education did you need to become a CPA?
- What is your typical day like as an accountant?
- What is the best part of your job?

Engage the students by asking some questions. The students may be reluctant to volunteer at first, so select students to respond. Questions include:

- Ask if they know what CPA stands for.
- What do you think an accountant does?
- What kinds of skills do you think you need to be an accountant?
- What kinds of organizations do you think need accountants?
- (Ask for a show of hands) How many of you have ever considered a career in accounting?

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Explain to the students that you will be walking through a site called JA My Way with them. This site was developed by Junior Achievement. In partnership with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, you will be working with them to explore careers in the accounting industry. In addition to JA My Way, you will also be visiting a site “Start Here. Go Places.®,” which is also made possible by the AICPA.

Using JA My Way

- Have students go to www.JAMyWay.org/Accounting. You will not have to log-in to use this page.
- Have students select “How Do You Fit In?” quiz
 - » Have each student take the quiz by making their selection for “Type of Office Environment,” “Type of Work,” “Type of Organization,” and “Career Goals.”
 - » Ask for volunteers or select two or three students to share what choices they made and what kind of organization the quiz suggested they work for. Some follow-up questions could be:
 - Have you thought about working for an organization like that before?
 - What do you think some of the benefits and challenges are with this job?
 - What kind of education do you think you might need for this kind of work?
- Have students select “Creativity in the Numbers”
 - » Explain to the students that a “Growth Hacker” is a new kind of business professional who uses creativity, analytics, and innovative thinking to help their company or organization succeed in the global economy.
 - » Accountants are critical to the success of organizations. They help leadership make informed decisions about finances and ensure that costs are managed properly in order for organizations to accomplish their goals.
 - » Ask the students to select the organization suggested by the quiz and take a few minutes to read the description of the organization and the role of Growth Hackers in to them.
 - » Ask for volunteers or select five students to share what they read. Select the students based on the type of organization they selected. Specifically, have a student share for “Startup,” another for “Mid-Size Firm,” one for “Large Firm,” one for “Nonprofit,” and a final one for “Government.” It is possible that your students have not selected all of these types of organizations. If that is the case, go with fewer examples. Questions to ask:
 - What are some of the traits or characteristics needed to be successful at this kind of organization?
 - What interests you about this kind of career?
 - Is there anything about this job that you wouldn’t like?
 - So what do you think a career like this pays?



- Have students select “FutureMe.”
 - » Let the students know that “FutureMe” is part of “Start Here. Go Places.” A site developed for them by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Let the students know that there is much to explore on “Start Here. Go Places” if they sign up and suggest they consider doing so after the session, with their parent or guardian’s consent.
 - » Have them go through the “FutureMe” exercise.
 - » When they are done, ask them the following questions:
 - What jobs were suggested based on your answers?
 - Which ones were the most interesting to you? Why?
 - How much education would you need to become a CPA?
- Have students go back to www.JAMyWay.org/Accounting
 - » Tell the students they are going to see what CPAs make by going to “Salary Snapshot.”
 - » Give them a few minutes to go through the job that most closely matches what they have discovered so far.
 - » Encourage the students to explore other job types, as well.
 - » After a few minutes, ask the students the following questions:
 - Did the jobs you selected pay more or less than you thought?
 - Did you notice a difference in job pay based on industry?
 - Besides money, what are some factors that might cause someone to pick one industry over another?
 - Would you want to work for an organization that pays well but that doesn’t fit well with your personality?
 - What did you learn about accounting that you didn’t know before?
 - How has your opinion of accounting changed as a result of today?
 - (Ask for a Show of Hands) How many of you would consider a career in accounting now?

Conclusion:

End the session by thanking the students for their time and reiterating some of the benefits of accounting as a career. Encourage the students to go to “StartHereGoPlaces.com” and “JAMyWay.org” on their own time to learn more about accounting.