

Private equity associate

Help a fund buy whole companies with borrowed money, run them better and sell them years later for more.

TYPICAL PAY

\$425,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$175k to \$800k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Private equity firms, large pension and sovereign funds, family offices

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Finance, economics or accounting at a school banks recruit from.
- 2 Investment banking analyst** 2 to 3 years
You learn to value companies and run deals. This is the training private equity firms want.
- 3 On-cycle recruiting** A few days
Big firms interview first and second year bank analysts in a rush of a few days, for jobs that start up to 2 years later.
- 4 Associate** 2 to 3 years
Two to three years building models, checking companies and supporting deals.
- 5 Senior associate and up, or an MBA (Master of Business Administration)** 2 or more years
Some firms promote. Many send associates to business school, then rehire the best.

Pros and cons

- + Very high pay, with carry that can be huge for partners
- + You make the investment decision instead of advising on it
- + Usually fewer hours than investment banking
- Very few seats, and most need banking first
- 60 to 80 hour weeks during live deals
- Carry can be worth nothing if the fund does badly

Good to know

Hired 2 years ahead

Big firms have long hired bank analysts for jobs starting up to 2 years later. In 2025, JPMorgan Chase (the largest US bank) said it would fire analysts who accepted such offers in their first 18 months.

The pause did not last

Several big firms paused this early hiring in June 2025. In January 2026, Blackstone, Apollo, Carlyle and others restarted it with interviews over just two days.

Optional boosts

A top banking group. Fast, clean modeling. Headhunter relationships. Deals you can talk about in detail.

Where these numbers come from

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Financial analysts (May 2025 pay, 2025 to 2035 outlook)

My Next Move: Financial and Investment Analysts (13-2051.00)

Heidrick and Struggles: 2025 North America private equity compensation survey

Mergers and Inquisitions: private equity salary, bonus and carry by level, 2026

Numbers checked October 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise.

Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/private-equity-investor>



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