

Tax Lawyer

Work out what the tax code actually requires, and argue it when the government disagrees. Long training, and one of the better paid corners of law.

TYPICAL PAY

\$159,670

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$78k to \$352k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 9 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Law firm offices, company tax departments, accounting firms, g...

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
No required major. Accounting, economics or finance are genuinely useful here, unlike in most areas of law.
- 2 The LSAT (Law School Admission Test)** Months of preparation
The admission test accepted by every accredited law school. Your score and grade point average decide which schools and which scholarships open up.
- 3 Law school** 3 years
Three years for the juris doctor degree. Take every tax course offered and get onto a tax clinic if the school has one.
- 4 The bar examination** 2 to 3 months of study
Taken in the state where you want to practice, plus an ethics exam and a character and fitness background check.
- 5 Specialist tax degree, optional but common** 1 year
A Master of Laws in taxation is a one-year degree taken after law school. A number of law schools run one, and tax employers pay attention to it.

Pros and cons

- + Among the best paid specialties in law
- + The knowledge is scarce, which makes you hard to replace
- + Less unpredictable than deal work or trial work in most weeks
- Seven to nine years and often six figures of debt before you start
- The law changes every time Congress passes a tax bill, so you never stop studying
- Billable hour targets at large firms make 60 hour weeks routine

Optional boosts

Tax controversy. Transactional tax. Estate and gift planning. International and transfer pricing.

Good to know

There is a whole court just for tax

The United States Tax Court hears disputes between taxpayers and the Internal Revenue Service, and you can file there before paying the amount in dispute. It is unusual in that people who are not lawyers ca...

Three kinds of people can represent you

Before the Internal Revenue Service, only attorneys, certified public accountants and enrolled agents have unlimited rights to represent a taxpayer. Enrolled agent is the highest credential the agency itself a...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Lawyers (23-1011.00)

National Conference of Bar Examiners: the Uniform Bar Examination

Internal Revenue Service: enrolled agents and who may represent taxpayers

New York University School of Law

Numbers checked September 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/tax-lawyer>



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