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How to Become an Executive Assistant

Being an executive assistant is more than answering phones and scheduling meetings.



By Dillon Price, Monster Contributor



Being an administrative professional is more than just another day at the office. When you learn how to become an executive assistant, a morning greeting to the boss is only the tip of the iceberg. Executives and senior management often have busy schedules—they don't have the time to take phone calls, organize meetings, write memos, or prepare reports. That's where you come in.

As an executive assistant, you play a vital role in carrying out critical day-to-day tasks within a company. You're also the point of contact and gatekeeper between an executive, internal staff,

and visitors. If a career in this fast-paced, yet rewarding, field interests you, read on to find out what it takes to land your first administrative job.

What Is an Executive Assistant?

An executive assistant (also called an executive administrative assistant) is an administrative professional similar to a secretary. The difference is that an executive assistant takes on more advanced administrative duties to assist a company's executive or senior management and has greater decision-making abilities within a company or agency. In short, they make the jobs of executives much easier.

Executive Assistant vs. Administrative Assistant

So, is an executive assistant just like an administrative assistant? The two roles are similar, but there are distinct differences between them. Administrative assistants answer phone calls, schedule appointments, arrange meetings, prepare memos, edit documents, and perform bookkeeping duties, just like executive assistants. But the executive assistant role involves a wider range of duties including research, managing other administrative staff, and preparing reports.

What Does an Executive Assistant Do?

Most executive assistants work for large corporations, government agencies, colleges and universities, private enterprises, and financial investment firms.

On an average day, you might find an executive assistant:

- Answering phone calls, taking messages, or transferring calls.
- Setting up staff meetings.
- Managing emails and faxes.
- Preparing office memos and invoices.
- Editing documents.
- Maintaining filing systems and databases in computer systems and on paper.
- Performing basic bookkeeping duties.
- Setting an executive's daily schedule.
- Conducting market research.
- Preparing reports and statistics so executives can make educated business decisions.
- Determining which phone calls and visitors will reach the executive.
- Supervising and training lower-level administrative staff

The learn more about what executive assistant skills employers look for in applicants, take a look at Monster's sample [executive assistant job ad](#).

How to Become an Executive Assistant

You don't necessarily need a college degree or certification to become an executive assistant. But becoming an executive assistant is a highly competitive field. Prior administrative assistant experience, an internship, a college degree, or a certification will put you ahead of the competition.

In addition to college education and prior experience, employers look for candidates with working knowledge of Microsoft Office, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, decision-making skills, and the ability to write clearly.

Executive Assistant Education

Many executive assistants have an associate degree, but some companies prefer to hire candidates with a bachelor's degree. There are tons of accredited [colleges that offer executive assistant courses](#) covering:

- Business administration.
- Business communication.
- Database management.
- Information technology.
- Organizational strategies.
- Bookkeeping and/or accounting.

Executive Assistant Certification

Executive assistant certification is available from many accredited colleges and professional organizations. For example, you can obtain the [Advanced Certificate for the Executive Assistant](#) (ACEA) by attending a five-day, in-person training course or completing the courses remotely. The program focuses on strategic thinking, corporate goals, management skills, leadership skills, problem-solving, and several other important skills.

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The International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) offers basic, intermediate, and premium levels of certification for administrative professionals including executive assistants. The **Certified Administrative Professional** (CAP) designation is intended for college students or graduates with at least an associate degree who want to get the experience they need to maximize their chances of getting hired.

This job is often a stepping stone to a role in the corporate world, so if you're looking for a way to pay for part of your studies, check out these [scholarships for business majors](#).

How Much Do Executive Assistants Make?

Monster data shows the **median executive assistant salary** is \$71,254 per year. Pay often fluctuates by experience and industry type. For example, the lowest-earning assistants make a median of \$53,466 per year, while the top earners make closer to \$91,575. The top-paying industry is media streaming distribution services, with an average executive assistant salary of \$119,960, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

You can look up the average salary for executive assistants in your location by using the [Monster Salary Guide](#).

How to Find Executive Assistant Jobs

Now that we've gone over the fundamentals of how to become an executive assistant, it's time to assist your own career in getting to the next stage. Before starting your job search, show off your organizational skills to potential employers by putting together an exceptional **executive assistant resume**. Then, take it one step further by demonstrating your writing and communication skills in your **executive assistant cover letter**.

Once you've compiled your application materials, start searching Monster's **executive assistant jobs** to find the right opportunity for you.

If you're unable to find any available jobs locally, consider these top five **states with the highest rate of executive assistant employment**:

- [New York](#)
- [California](#)
- [Texas](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Massachusetts](#)

You can also find executive assistant jobs in these top five U.S. metro areas:

- [New York City](#)
- [Los Angeles](#)
- [Boston](#)
- [Washington D.C.](#)
- [San Francisco](#)

Execute Your Job Search by Signing Up at Monster

You now have a comprehensive idea of how to become an executive assistant. Are you ready to schedule your first interview? If so, there's an office chair and desk waiting for you. [Sign up with Monster for free](#) to upload your resume and get free notifications for executive assistant positions in your area.

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