

Payroll specialist job description

Updated October 17, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team. Replace everything in [brackets].

Details

- Department: [Department]
- Reports to: [Manager title]
- Location: [City, State, or remote]
- Employment type: [Full-time, part-time, or seasonal]
- FLSA status: Nonexempt
- Pay range: [\$X to \$Y per hour]

About [Company]

[Two or three sentences about what your company does, who it serves, and why people like working here.]

Job summary

We're hiring a payroll specialist to run accurate, on-time payroll for our [number] employees across [number] states, and keep us compliant with wage and tax rules.

What you'll do

- Process [weekly, biweekly, or semimonthly] payroll accurately and on time.
- Review timecards, overtime, and pay changes before each run.
- Set up new hires, terminations, and changes in the payroll system.
- Calculate final pay according to state deadlines.
- Manage deductions, garnishments, and benefit withholdings.
- Reconcile payroll to the general ledger and tax filings.
- Support quarterly and year-end tax filings and W-2 processing.
- Answer employee pay questions clearly and confidentially.

What you'll need

- [Two] or more years of payroll experience.
- Working knowledge of federal and state wage and tax rules.
- Experience with [ADP, Paylocity, Gusto, or similar].
- Strong Excel skills and attention to detail.

Nice to have

- Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC) or Certified Payroll Professional (CPP) from PayrollOrg.
- Multi-state payroll experience.
- Experience with garnishments and union payroll.

Skills

Accuracy, Wage and hour knowledge, Payroll tax, Confidentiality, Excel, Deadline management.

Physical demands and work environment

Office, hybrid, or remote setting, with firm deadlines around each payroll and year end.

Pay and benefits

[\$X to \$Y per hour], based on experience and location. [List benefits, such as health insurance, retirement plan match, paid time off, and training.]

Equal opportunity

[Company] is an equal opportunity employer. We consider all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other status protected by law. If you need a reasonable accommodation to apply or interview, contact [name] at [email or phone].

Hiring notes for HR and the hiring manager

Pay data

- Median hourly wage: \$28.01 (BLS OEWS, May 2025, SOC 43-3051, Payroll and timekeeping clerks).
- Median annual equivalent: \$58,260 (hourly median x 2,080 hours).
- Mean annual wage: \$59,630.
- Check state and metro data at bls.gov/oes before setting your range, and include the range in postings where the law requires it.

Exempt status and legal notes

FLSA status: Nonexempt (overtime eligible). Duties and pay decide overtime eligibility, not the job title.

Payroll clerks and specialists who process payroll are generally nonexempt. Senior payroll managers who exercise significant independent judgment may qualify for the administrative exemption. Final pay deadlines vary widely by state, with some requiring payment on the last day of work. Payroll staff handle Social Security numbers and bank details, so access controls and confidentiality training matter.

How to customize it

- State headcount, number of states, and pay frequency.
- Name the payroll system.
- Say whether the role covers benefits or HRIS work.
- Mention support for PayrollOrg certification.

Interview questions

1. Walk me through how you check a payroll before you submit it.
2. An employee says their check is short. What do you do?
3. How do you handle a new employee working in a state where you don't yet have an account?
4. How do you stay current on wage and tax changes?

Before you post

- Separate required from preferred. Required means you won't hire without it. Everything else is preferred. Long required lists screen out qualified people.
- Describe physical demands and environment. Lifting, standing, shifts, travel, noise, temperature. This sets honest expectations and supports an ADA essential functions record.
- State the pay range. Required in a growing list of states and cities, and expected by candidates everywhere else.

- Say exempt or nonexempt. Decide based on duties and salary before you post, and keep the classification consistent with how you pay.
- Name required licenses and checks. Licenses, certifications, background checks, drug tests, and driving record reviews, with the timing of each.
- Add the accommodation and EEO statement. Tell candidates how to request a reasonable accommodation, and include your equal opportunity statement.

Find 50 free job descriptions at hrtally.com/job-descriptions

Compare HR software, read independent reviews, and get free quotes at www.hrtally.com

Related: Bookkeeper, Accountant, HR generalist