FINANCE CAREER EXPLORATION GUIDE

Find Your Place in Finance

A practical guide for B.Com, BBA and MBA (Finance) students

18 career paths. Understand the real work, the skills to develop, and the opportunities each path can lead to.

Finance is much more than calculations. It includes understanding businesses, analysing information, managing risk, helping clients, and making better decisions. The right career depends on your interests, strengths, and the kind of work you want to do.

How to use this guide: Explore the roles, shortlist two or three that interest you, compare real job descriptions, and build one practical project before deciding on a specialisation.

Prepared for career exploration • India-focused role examples

1. The Core Finance Career Paths

These roles are common starting points for commerce and finance graduates. Exact responsibilities vary by employer, industry, and seniority.

1. Accounting & Bookkeeping

What you'll do: Record transactions, maintain ledgers, reconcile bank statements, and help prepare monthly and annual financial reports.

Skills to build: Accounting fundamentals, Excel, attention to detail, accounting software such as Tally or ERP systems.

Potential growth: Accounts Assistant → Accountant → Senior Accountant → Accounting Manager / Financial Controller.

May suit you if: You like accuracy, organised processes, and clear rules.

2. Audit

What you'll do: Check financial records and supporting documents, test internal controls, identify discrepancies, and document audit findings.

Skills to build: Accounting, analytical thinking, documentation, Excel, professional scepticism, and audit standards.

Potential growth: Audit Associate → Senior Associate → Audit Manager → Director / Partner (in applicable firms).

May suit you if: You enjoy checking details and understanding how a business works.

3. Taxation

What you'll do: Support income-tax and GST compliance, prepare working papers and returns, research tax rules, and assist with tax planning.

Skills to build: Tax fundamentals, accounting, research, Excel, deadlines, and clear documentation.

Potential growth: Tax Associate → Tax Consultant → Tax Manager → Tax Director / independent practice, subject to qualifications.

May suit you if: You enjoy rules, technical detail, and compliance.

4. Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A;)

What you'll do: Build budgets and forecasts, compare actual results with plans, explain variances, and help leaders make decisions.

Skills to build: Advanced Excel, financial statements, budgeting, forecasting, presentation, and business understanding.

Potential growth: FP&A; Analyst → Senior Analyst → FP&A; Manager → Finance Director / CFO track.

May suit you if: You want to combine numbers with business decisions.

5. Corporate Finance

What you'll do: Support funding decisions, cash-flow planning, capital expenditure analysis, investment evaluation, and financial strategy.

Skills to build: Financial analysis, Excel, valuation basics, accounting, communication, and commercial judgement.

Potential growth: Finance Analyst → Senior Analyst → Finance Manager → Head of Finance / CFO track.

May suit you if: You are interested in how companies fund and grow their businesses.

6. Equity & Financial Research

What you'll do: Study companies and industries, analyse financial statements, estimate business value, assess risks, and write research reports.

Skills to build: Accounting, valuation, Excel, research, financial modelling, and concise writing.

Potential growth: Research Associate → Equity Research Analyst → Senior Analyst → Research Head / portfolio-related roles.

May suit you if: You enjoy market trends and asking what the numbers mean.

7. Investment Banking

What you'll do: Support mergers and acquisitions, fundraising, company valuations, financial models, pitch decks, and transaction documents.

Skills to build: Advanced Excel, valuation, financial modelling, presentation skills, accuracy, and resilience under pressure.

Potential growth: Investment Banking Analyst → Associate → Vice President → Director / Managing Director.

May suit you if: You enjoy complex transactions and fast-paced work.

Entry can be competitive; internships, strong modelling skills, and relevant qualifications can help.

8. Banking & Credit Analysis

What you'll do: Review loan applications, assess repayment ability, analyse financial statements, evaluate credit risk, and support lending decisions.

Skills to build: Financial statement analysis, credit fundamentals, Excel, report writing, and communication.

Potential growth: Credit Analyst → Senior Credit Analyst → Credit Manager → Credit Risk Head / lending leadership.

May suit you if: You like assessing financial strength and lending risk.

9. Risk Management

What you'll do: Identify credit, market, liquidity, or operational risks; monitor indicators; run scenario or stress analysis; and report findings.

Skills to build: Analytical thinking, Excel, statistics basics, risk concepts, documentation, and sometimes SQL or Python.

Potential growth: Risk Analyst → Senior Risk Analyst → Risk Manager → Chief Risk Officer pathway.

May suit you if: You enjoy structured problem-solving and anticipating what could go wrong.

10. Business Analyst / Financial Data Analyst

What you'll do: Collect and clean data, track KPIs, create dashboards, identify trends, and turn findings into business recommendations.

Skills to build: Excel, Power BI, data visualisation, SQL basics, critical thinking, and communication.

Potential growth: Junior Analyst → Business / Data Analyst → Senior Analyst → Analytics Manager / Strategy roles.

May suit you if: You like technology, dashboards, and explaining patterns in data.

2. Specialist & Emerging Finance Careers

These options can suit students who want to specialise in investments, client relationships, investigations, regulation, or financial technology.

11. Wealth Management & Financial Advisory

What you'll do: Understand clients' goals, discuss financial products, review portfolios, and help clients plan for financial milestones.

Skills to build: Communication, investment basics, relationship management, risk profiling, and ethical sales skills.

Potential growth: Relationship / Wealth Associate → Wealth Manager → Senior Wealth Manager → Private Banker / business head.

May suit you if: You like working with people and explaining financial choices.

Advisory, distribution, and other regulated activities may require specific registration or certifications in India.

12. Investment & Portfolio Management

What you'll do: Research investments, monitor portfolio performance, assess risk and return, and support asset-allocation decisions.

Skills to build: Markets knowledge, valuation, portfolio theory, research, risk analysis, and often relevant experience.

Potential growth: Investment Analyst → Portfolio Analyst → Portfolio Manager → Head of Investments.

May suit you if: You are interested in how money is invested and portfolios are managed.

Often competitive and may require advanced qualifications, experience, or regulatory credentials.

13. Treasury & Cash Management

What you'll do: Forecast cash needs, monitor balances and liquidity, support borrowing decisions, and track foreign-exchange or interest-rate exposure.

Skills to build: Cash-flow forecasting, Excel, banking products, financial markets, and accuracy.

Potential growth: Treasury Analyst → Treasury Manager → Treasurer → Finance Director / CFO track.

May suit you if: You like cash flow, liquidity, and how companies manage money day to day.

14. Forensic Accounting & Fraud Investigation

What you'll do: Investigate unusual transactions, analyse financial evidence, identify patterns, and prepare findings for audit, compliance, or legal teams.

Skills to build: Accounting, investigation, data analysis, documentation, and internal-control knowledge.

Potential growth: Audit / Forensic Analyst → Forensic Specialist → Investigation Manager → Forensic Practice Lead.

May suit you if: You enjoy investigation and looking for inconsistencies.

15. Compliance & AML

What you'll do: Review customer records and transaction alerts, support KYC checks, investigate unusual activity, and document compliance with regulations.

Skills to build: Attention to detail, regulatory research, report writing, analytical thinking, and KYC/AML knowledge.

Potential growth: KYC / AML Analyst → Compliance Officer → Compliance Manager → Chief Compliance Officer pathway.

May suit you if: You prefer structured work with rules and risk controls.

16. Financial Modelling & Valuation

What you'll do: Build spreadsheet models for revenue, costs, cash flow, valuation, and scenarios to support business or investment decisions.

Skills to build: Advanced Excel, accounting, valuation methods, financial statements, and logical reasoning.

Potential growth: Financial Analyst → Modelling / Valuation Specialist → Manager → Director-level specialist roles.

May suit you if: You enjoy building models and testing assumptions.

Modelling is often a specialist skill within corporate finance, research, consulting, or investment banking.

17. Fintech & Payments Operations

What you'll do: Monitor payment performance, reconcile transactions, investigate failures or disputes, analyse operational metrics, and improve processes.

Skills to build: Excel, process improvement, data analysis, financial product knowledge, communication, and sometimes SQL.

Potential growth: Operations Analyst → Senior Analyst → Product / Business Operations Manager → Operations Head.

May suit you if: You like finance combined with technology and practical operations.

18. Quantitative Finance & Actuarial Analysis

What you'll do: Use mathematics and statistical models for pricing, forecasting, insurance risk, financial markets, or portfolio analysis.

Skills to build: Strong mathematics, probability, statistics, programming, and analytical reasoning.

Potential growth: Quant / Actuarial Analyst → Senior Analyst → Specialist / Qualified Actuary → Research or risk leadership.

May suit you if: You enjoy maths and technical problem-solving.

A more technical route: actuarial careers usually require professional exams; quant roles often need stronger maths and coding.

3. Quick Career Comparison

Use this table to compare the main focus and a typical entry-level job title. These are examples, not fixed requirements.

Career path	Main focus	Possible entry role
Accounting	Records and reporting	Accounts Assistant
Audit	Accuracy and controls	Audit Associate
Taxation	Tax rules and compliance	Tax Associate
FP&A;	Budgets and forecasts	FP&A; Analyst
Corporate finance	Funding and investment decisions	Finance Analyst
Equity research	Company and stock analysis	Research Associate
Investment banking	Deals and fundraising	Investment Banking Analyst
Credit analysis	Borrower strength and lending risk	Credit Analyst
Risk management	Identifying and controlling risk	Risk Analyst
Business / data analysis	KPIs and business insights	Junior Analyst
Wealth management	Client goals and investments	Wealth Associate
Portfolio management	Investment allocation	Investment Analyst
Treasury	Cash, liquidity and funding	Treasury Analyst
Forensic accounting	Financial investigations	Forensic / Audit Associate
Compliance / AML	Regulations and transaction monitoring	KYC / AML Analyst
Modelling / valuation	Forecasts and business value	Financial Analyst
Fintech operations	Payments and processes	Operations Analyst
Quant / actuarial	Mathematical models and risk	Trainee / Junior Analyst

4. Essential Skills to Build

Skill area	What to learn
Excel & spreadsheets	Formulas, SUMIFS, IF, XLOOKUP, PivotTables, charts, and data cleaning.
Accounting fundamentals	Journal entries, ledgers, trial balances, P&L;, balance sheets, cash flows, and reconciliations.
Financial analysis	Ratios, margins, working capital, cash-flow analysis, budgets, and forecasts.
Data tools	Power BI for dashboards; SQL for retrieving data; Python for more technical analytical roles.
Communication	Explain what the numbers mean, write clear reports, present findings, and work with non-finance teams.
Professional habits	Accuracy, confidentiality, ethics, critical thinking, time management, and willingness to learn.

5. Qualifications That May Help

Additional qualifications can support specialisation, but they are not compulsory for every role. Check the requirements of the roles and activities you are targeting before investing time or money.

Qualification	Potential relevance
CA (Chartered Accountant)	Audit, taxation, accounting, controllership
CMA (India)	Cost accounting, management accounting, costing
ACCA	Accounting, audit and financial reporting; subject to applicable requirements
CFA	Investment research, portfolio management, investment analysis
FRM	Financial risk management
CFP	Personal financial planning, subject to applicable certification requirements
MBA Finance	Corporate finance, banking, management and leadership pathways
NISM certifications	Specific Indian securities-market activities, depending on the role

Tip: Don’t collect certificates just to lengthen your résumé. First identify your target role, review job descriptions, and then choose the qualification or project that fills a real skills gap.

6. Your 90-Day Starter Roadmap

DAYS 1–30 | Build foundations

Revise accounting and the three financial statements. Practise Excel formulas, PivotTables and lookups. Learn basic financial ratios. Review job descriptions for two or three target roles.

DAYS 31–60 | Choose a specialisation

FP&A;: build a budget and variance analysis. Accounting: practise ledger entries and reconciliations. Research: analyse a listed company. Data analytics: build a Power BI dashboard. Credit: prepare a basic borrower analysis.

DAYS 61–90 | Prepare to apply

Finish one portfolio project. Update your résumé with demonstrable skills. Practise role-specific interview questions. Apply for internships and entry-level roles. Prepare to explain your project and findings.

7. How Career Growth Can Look

Entry level: Trainee, Junior Analyst, Associate → Independent contributor: Analyst, Senior Associate, Specialist → Management: Senior Analyst, Manager, Team Lead → Leadership: Finance Director, Head of Function, CFO, or senior specialist.

Not every career follows the same ladder. Progress depends on performance, experience, technical expertise, qualifications where relevant, and opportunities within the organisation.

8. Find the Career That Fits You

If you enjoy...	Explore roles such as...
Accuracy, records and rules	Accounting, Audit, Taxation, Compliance
Business problems and forecasts	FP&A;, Corporate Finance, Treasury
Markets and investments	Equity Research, Investment Banking, Portfolio Management
People and client relationships	Wealth Management, Banking, Financial Advisory
Technology and data	Business / Data Analysis, Fintech Operations, Quantitative Finance
Investigation and risk	Forensic Accounting, Credit Analysis, Risk Management, AML

YOUR NEXT STEP

Shortlist two or three roles. Learn what the day-to-day work involves, build a small project, and test your interest through an internship or entry-level opportunity.

Career titles, responsibilities and progression vary by employer and location. This guide is for general career education and is not a guarantee of employment or advancement.