

Bookkeeping Tips

Freelance bookkeeping: Helpful hints on billing

Because 35% of AIPB members are full- or part-time freelancers, our monthly technical briefing for members, *The General Ledger* (www.aipb.org/general_ledger.html), includes tips on freelancing.

On your bill, recap the work you did for the client. Don't add up items. Just include a one-paragraph description.

"Bookkeeping services rendered for May, which included the following: Bank reconciliation for April statements, cash receipts journal, cash disbursements journal, general journal [if on the accrual basis]. General journal and accruals, trial balance, general ledger postings."

If appropriate, add "payroll preparation," "quarterly payroll tax returns," etc. Although most clients don't understand these terms, they will usually be impressed. And it answers an unasked question, "What does she do for me, anyway?" Put a "thank you" at the bottom of your bill.

For hidden time spent on a client's behalf, add "numerous phone calls to IRS," or "with John Smith regarding. . ." or "with customers about. . ." But avoid charging for small items, such as photocopying, unless costs exceed \$20. Petty charges infuriate clients.

Avoid on your bill: "Please call if you have questions." It sounds as though you think you overbilled.

Be consistent in your billing. Don't give details in one monthly bill, but not the next. Don't bill on the first one month, the 10th in the next month, the 20th in the month after. Similarly, don't type a bill one month, handwrite it the next. Customers like stability, consistency, familiarity. Since no one likes paying bills, don't give anyone an excuse to get annoyed.

Date bills the last day of the month. It's much more diplomatic to call in May "about my April bill" than to call in May "about my May bill"—which may sound pushy.

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The American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers (AIPB), is the national association for bookkeepers, currently with 30,000 active members
AIPB was founded in 1987 for the following purposes:

- To recognize bookkeeping as a profession—and bookkeepers as professionals
- To make sure that each member has the latest bookkeeping, accounting and tax information
- To answer members' everyday bookkeeping and accounting questions on the telephone at no charge.
- To provide bookkeepers with low-cost continuing professional education.
- To return the membership fees of any bookkeeper who is dissatisfied with the benefits of membership