What is Full-Charge Bookkeeping?
      A full-charge bookkeeper is one who can and does perform all of the bookkeeping tasks of any small business, including payroll taxes and monthly financial statements, with little or no supervision. About the only task needed to be "outsourced" is the corporate tax return (typically, to a CPA). That, in essence, is full-charge bookkeeping.

      Defined: to *outsource* is to hire another company or individual to perform a task.

Getting Started and Organized When Hired
      QUESTIONS TO ASK - DURING THE INTERVIEW, OR BEFORE TASKS
1. Defining the Position:
    Q: What exactly will I be responsible for?
    Q: Are there any tasks that will be outsourced?
2. Are there any areas we want to be doing differently / better, or paying more attention to?
3. Are there any areas/tasks that require more urgent attention?

      WHERE TO START
      Once you've clarified with the owner what he or she has hired you for, it's time to get to the business at hand. But, looking at accomplishing all of these tasks can be overwhelming; so where should you start? The first thing you should do is make sure you have a list of current employees, and their pay rates. Payroll may be soon, and you wouldn't want to be unprepared, or late with employees' checks. A good place to store the current list of employees is in an "Information" file-folder, close at hand, for payroll and other related areas. In addition to an "Employee Information Sheet", start a "Business Information Sheet" with things like tax identification numbers, phone, fax, address(es) and any company owner information you might need or acquire for credit applications.
      While you're at it, and if the files are at your disposal, you may want to be sure that the human resource files are in order - "current" separated from "terminated" employees, and that each file has the proper documents: Forms W-4 & I-9 (reference: Chapter 2 - Tasks > Human Resource Administration). After preparing for payroll, the short list of things you should get a handle on is (1) the company bills (see Tasks > Accounts Payable). And, (2) review the company receivables to see where they stand (see Tasks > Accounts Receivable). That will get you started. For the complete "new job checklist", see below.

      THE FILING SYSTEM
      I must emphasize the importance of organization to a bookkeeper. Organized records not only make a bookkeeper's life easier, but also help those around the bookkeeper. For instance, what if the owner wanted or needed to find something on a day you were not there - perhaps a bill that needed to be paid, if a vendor called. You wouldn't want the owner to open your file drawers and find a mess. In fact, if you find the bookkeeper's files somewhat disorganized when you arrive, it might be to your benefit, and the company's as well, to organize them.
      The typical file drawer organization should include approximately five file drawers as follows.
1. *Unpaid Payables* (defined below).
2. *Unpaid Receivables* (defined below).
3. *Paid Payables for Year 20xx* (the current year).
4. *Paid Receivables for Year 20xx* (the current year).
5. *Reports* (eg. Financial Statements, Payroll Tax Reports, Employee List).

      Defined: *payables* are the bills that your company owes.

      Defined: *receivables* are what customers owe your company.

      The Unpaid Payables, Unpaid Receivables, and Reports file drawers should be closest to the bookkeeper's fingertips - for quickest access, when the boss asks for something. Previous years' paid payables and receivables should be stored in a box. For more information, reference Chapter 2 - Tasks > Year-End Items > Record Retention. Be sure to properly label the outside of the drawers.

Getting Started and Organized When Hired (cont.)

I'd like to point out two more things regarding filing. The first is that in the business world, nearly everyone files the most recent documents to the front of folders, not the back. This way they will be easier to access. The second thing concerns filing for companies with proper names, for instance "John Smith Incorporated". Do not file this under Smith, but under John, because it is incorporated. Obviously, John Smith (not incorporated) would be filed under "Smith". Finally, you may get hired into a company with a file system, already in place, that is difficult to work with. You will have to "feel out" your place and relationship with the owner - to see if it is ok to make any suggestions or changes.

IS DAMAGE CONTROL NEEDED?

Do beware - the possibility exists that you get hired into a position which requires a certain amount of damage control immediately upon entering the position. For instance, if there hasn't been anyone in the bookkeeping position for six months. If you find yourself in this type of situation, you will need to start at the top, with the most important things - like payroll tax reports. Have reports been filed? Start with federal, then state and move on from there. You will also want to be sure there are not "shut-off notices" in the unpaid bills arena.

Defined: a *shut-off notice* is a written communication, usually from a utility company (electric, water and/or gas company) that says the company you work for has an unpaid, overdue bill. It's telling you that your company is about to lose (utility) service.

New Job Checklist
1) *Job Responsibilities Clarification:* from interview and/or further discussion with company owner.
2) *Information File Folder:*
    a. *Employee Information Sheet:* list current employees and their pay rates, for payroll.
    b. *Business Information Sheet:* list tax ID numbers, phone, fax, address(es), any company owner information needed for credit applications.
3) *Stop Gap Check*:
    a. Payroll Tax Reports Filed?
    b. I-9's and W-4's for current employees?
4) *Start a Master Schedule (from Appendix A):* list pay-periods, payroll tax report due dates, etc.
5) *Files Organized / At Your Fingertips?*
6) *Payables Aging:* any potential costly shut-offs for unpaid bills?
7) *Receivables Aging:* any significantly old / outstanding invoices of customers that need to be contacted?
8) *Any Petty Cash?* Be sure to reconcile with the books and company owner upon entering the job.
9) *Bank Statements:* are there any that arrived and need to be reconciled to the books?
10) *Is it the End of the Month or End of the Year?* Reference those chapters to see what task to perform.
11) *Calendar:* be sure to add all items from your Master Schedule to your calendar!
12) *State-Specific Requirements:* be sure you gain / have gained and understanding of your state's specific tax requirements.

Note: *confidentiality* - it should go without saying that bookkeeping information is considered confidential, particularly payroll related information - pay rates and pay checks or amounts. Do treat it as such!