Audit
In an audit of financial statements, the CPA plans and performs the audit to obtain reasonable assurance (which is a high level of assurance) about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. The CPA selects procedures based on his or her judgment. Such procedures may include inquiry, physical inspection, observation, third-party confirmation, examination and other procedures. Audits of financial statements of nonissuers\(^1\) are performed in accordance with the AICPA Statements on Auditing Standards (SASs) — which is referred to as generally accepted auditing standards (GAAS) — while audits of issuers\(^2\) are performed in accordance with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) Auditing Standards.

Examination
Examinations are audit-level engagements designed to provide a high level of assurance on information other than historical financial statements. Examinations are performed in accordance with the AICPA Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAEs), and might be performed on information related to security and privacy controls, sustainability, greenhouse gases, eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) and other business matters.

Review
In a review of financial statements, the CPA seeks to obtain limited assurance as a basis for reporting whether the CPA is aware of any material modifications that should be made to the financial statements in order for them to be presented in accordance with an applicable financial reporting framework. A review is substantially less in scope than an audit, and often is performed for privately held companies that are required to provide financial statements to outside parties such as banks, creditors, or potential purchasers. Reviews of financial statements are conducted in accordance with the AICPA Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARSs), except for reviews of certain interim financial information that are conducted in accordance with the AICPA Statements on Auditing Standards (SASs). Reviews of subject matter other than historical financial statements are performed in accordance with the AICPA Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAEs).

---

\(^1\) Nonissuers are any entity not subject to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 or the rules of the SEC.

\(^2\) “Issuers” generally means those public entities that issue or propose securities such as stocks and bonds. Issuers are subject to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 or the rules of the SEC.
STANDARDS APPLICATION

- **Statements on Auditing Standards (SASs)** — Audit reports for entities not included under the authority of the PCAOB
- **PCAOB Auditing Standards (ASs)** — Audit reports for issuers as defined by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
- **Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAEs)** — All other engagements, except those services covered by SASs or SSARSs, in which a CPA is engaged to issue or does issue an examination, review, or agreed-upon procedures report on subject matter (or an assertion about subject matter) that is the responsibility of another party
- **Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARSs)** — Engagements on unaudited financial statements or other unaudited financial information for nonpublic entities

For more information visit [aicpa.org/state](https://aicpa.org/state) or contact Lindsay Patterson, lpatterson@aicpa.org, 202.434.9201.