8 strategies for CPA Exam success
So you’re ready to tackle the Uniform CPA Examination?

Congratulations! This is an ambitious goal. And it’ll be great for your career. The CPA license can open the door to a promising future, increase opportunities for advancement within your firm and boost your earning potential.

Want to be a CPA? Make sure you’re eligible

Before you can earn the CPA, you must meet three eligibility requirements, also known as the 3 E’s:

1. **Education** — Achieve 150 semester hours with a concentration in accounting, and a baccalaureate or graduate degree to earn licensure; some states allow candidates to test at 120 semester hours.

2. **Examination** — Within an 18-month time frame, pass all four sections (Auditing and Attestation; Business Environment and Concepts; Financial Accounting; and Reporting and Regulation).

3. **Experience** — This can vary among jurisdictions, but basically, have a minimum of one year experience (about 2,000 hours) verified by a licensed CPA. This experience should include accounting, attest, auditing, or tax.

Some jurisdictions also include a fourth E, “Ethics,” whenever an additional ethics exam is necessary.

There are differences between jurisdictions’ eligibility requirements, so it’s important to know what your specific jurisdiction stipulates. Check with your state board or review specific state exam requirements at [ThisWayToCPA.com](https://www.ThisWayToCPA.com), where you can also learn more about exam eligibility requirements.
Like anything else worthwhile, the journey toward the CPA requires commitment, discipline and planning. Here are eight strategies for CPA Exam success.

1. **Realize it’s a marathon, not a sprint.**
   It helps to imagine the entire exam process as a journey with four destination points – the four exam sections. When you prepare for each milestone and plan subsequent breaks, you’ll naturally feel more confident and comfortable as you approach each section.

2. **Know what’s on the exam.**
   The [Examination Blueprints](#) tell all — they serve as the foundation of the exam. The blueprints give you section-by-section detail on how exam content is organized, how it’s weighted, plus representative tasks that may be tested. We recommend you review — and know — each section thoroughly in advance.

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3. **Study, study, study.**
   The best preparation for passing the exam is … studying. Make sure you research the resources that work best for you. This includes the Examination Blueprints, study guides and study groups, plus exam tutorials and sample tests. Consider taking a review course. Find student reviews of [CPA Exam Prep Courses](#) at ThisWayToCPA.com.

4. **Learn, don’t memorize.**
   Passing the exam requires more than memorization; it requires you to demonstrate your comprehension. The exam tests your skills at four levels: remembering and understanding; application; analysis; and evaluation. So, really dig in and get to know the content before testing.
5. **Manage your time wisely.**

With four exam sections to pass in 18 months, your strategy should include time management. Develop a realistic exam-taking schedule that accommodates your commitments to work, school, family and other obligations. Plan enough study time to feel fully prepared for each section. The ThisWayToCPA [CPA Exam Aid](thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/cpa-exam-aid) can help you map your study plan.

Test-day time management also is vital. While you're practicing, you'll learn your strengths and weaknesses, so you can gauge how many minutes you need to tackle each question type. Pace yourself throughout each section to make sure you don’t get wrapped up in multiple-choice sections when you’ll need more time for simulations. Go into each of the four test sections with a game plan, and you’ll have more time (and less stress) to focus on passing.

**Quick links**

- CPA Exam Prep Course Reviews: [thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/prep-course-reviews](thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/prep-course-reviews)
- CPA Exam Aid: [thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/cpa-exam-aid](thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/cpa-exam-aid)
6. Simulate the experience.

You can practice the actual testing experience by navigating the CPA Examination Tutorial. It explains the format and functionality of the exam as it will appear at the test center.

After reviewing the tutorial, you can also take sample tests for each section to preview the content and get a grasp of the exam’s functions in action.

The exam uses three testing types:
- Multiple-choice questions (MCQs)
- Task-based simulations (TBSs)
- Written communication tasks

View the sample tests to see how these items will be presented on the actual exam.

Quick links
CPA Examination Tutorial and sample tests: aicpa.org/becomeacpa/cpaexam/forcandidates/tutorialandsamptest.html

Understanding exam technology

Learn how the exam technology works before you take it. Here are some important things to consider:

- Get familiar with the exam’s functionality, format, and directions before reporting to the test center.
- The more prepared you are to face the exam, the better you’ll manage test-taking time, the more relaxed you’ll be, and, hopefully, the better your score.
- **Important note:** The word processing and spreadsheet applications on the exam are similar (but not identical) to commercial applications.

The AICPA sample tests and tutorial are meant to provide you with a simulated exam experience, to help lessen stress and boost confidence on exam day (and hopefully help you reach your full score potential).
7. **Leverage mentors/colleagues/friends.**

Preparing for the exam doesn’t have to be a solo act. Here are some tips for gaining the right kind of support:

- Find other colleagues or friends who are taking the exam and study together.
- Use this toolkit’s CPA Examination Group Study Guide to join or form your own study group.
- If you don’t understand something when studying, ask a CPA colleague or professor for guidance. Access countless blogs, review courses, and other resources to help you prepare. You can find CPA Exam Prep Course Reviews at ThisWayToCPA.com.
- Join the AICPA’s CPA Candidate group on LinkedIn. You can connect with others and receive up-to-date information throughout your exam journey.
- Visit ThisWayToCPA.com to find stories and tips from candidates just like you, or stay up to date when you follow them on LinkedIn.

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**Quick links**

CPA Exam Prep Course Reviews: [thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/prep-course-reviews/](http://thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure/prep-course-reviews/)

AICPA’s CPA Candidate LinkedIn group: [linkedin.com/groups/160781/profile](https://linkedin.com/groups/160781/profile)

Exam Diaries: [thiswaytocpa.com/diaries](http://thiswaytocpa.com/diaries)

AICPA’s ThisWayToCPA LinkedIn Group: [linkedin.com/groups/4544044/profile](https://linkedin.com/groups/4544044/profile)

AICPA CPA Exam Resources: [aicpa.org/cpaexam](http://aicpa.org/cpaexam)

NASBA CPA Exam Resources: [nasba.org](http://nasba.org)

Prometric CPA Exam Resources: [prometric.com](http://prometric.com)

8. Look to exam partners for accurate information.

The AICPA, along with its partners, the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) and Prometric, provide candidates with accurate, up-to-date information related to all aspects of the Exam process. For the answers you need to specific questions, check here first. We’re here to help. Visit the ThisWayToCPA CPA Exam & Licensure Center for more information.

Top tips for exam day

- **Cellphones** — Once you enter the testing center, you may NOT access your cellphone. This includes using your cellphone during a scheduled break.

- **Finding a seat** — Candidates are advised to schedule an appointment at least 45 days before they plan to take the examination to ensure they will get the date and time they wish.

- **Introductory screens** — Currently, there are three introduction screens (Welcome, Confidentiality and Section Information). You have five minutes to complete the first screen and five minutes to complete the second and third screen. If you time out on the first screen, you may restart. If you time out on the second or third screens, you may not restart.

- **Late arrival** — If you arrive at the testing center after your scheduled appointment time, Prometric is not obligated to allow you to test. Know where you are going well in advance.

- **Navigation** — To navigate from question to question, use the controls at the bottom of the screen. Click the “Next” button (not the “Exit” button) to advance to the next question, or the “Previous” button to go to the previous question. To go directly to any question, click on its number.

- **Notice to schedule (NTS)** — Don’t forget to take your NTS, which has the launch code printed on it, to the test center. This is not to be confused with the “Confirmation” received from Prometric after scheduling an Examination. Check the date on your NTS to make sure it is the current one and not one from a previous test section.

- **Reporting issues** — Candidates should immediately report any technical difficulties during testing to the staff at the test center. Do not wait until the Examination has ended.

- **Rescheduling** — If you reschedule an appointment with Prometric, you must go to the “Reschedule Appointment: Appointment Complete” screen. This follows the “Appointment Verification” screen. Also, make sure you have received a confirmation email from Prometric verifying the new appointment time and place.

- **Notifying NASBA** — If you have any difficulties related to your test experience, a formal complaint should be sent to NASBA at candidatecare@nasba.org within five (5) days of taking the examination. Do not wait until the score has been released.