

# INTRODUCTION

To maximize the efficiency of your review program, begin by studying (not merely reading) this chapter and the next three chapters of this volume. They have been carefully organized and written to provide you with important information to assist you in successfully completing the CPA exam. Beyond providing a comprehensive outline to help you organize the material tested, Chapter 1 will assist you in organizing a study program to prepare for the exam. Self-discipline is essential.

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# Chapter 1: Beginning Your CPA Review Program

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE EXAMINATION

The Uniform CPA Examination is delivered using computer-based testing (CBT). Computer-based testing has several advantages. You may take the exam one section at a time. As a result, your studies can be focused on that one section, improving your chances for success. In addition, the exam is no longer offered twice a year. During eight months of every year, you may take the exam on your schedule, six days a week and in the morning or in the afternoon.

Successful completion of the Uniform CPA Examination is an attainable goal. Keep this point foremost in your mind as you study the first four chapters in this volume and develop your study plan.

### Purpose of the Examination<sup>1</sup>

The Uniform CPA Examination is designed to test the entry-level knowledge and skills necessary to protect the public interest. An entry-level CPA is defined as one who has fulfilled the applicable jurisdiction's educational requirements and has the knowledge and skills typically possessed by a person with up to two years of experience. These knowledge and skills were identified through a Practice Analysis performed in 2008, which served as a basis for the development of the content specifications for the exam beginning in 2011.

The CPA examination is one of many screening devices to assure the competence of those licensed to perform the attest function and to render professional accounting services. Other screening devices include educational requirements, ethics examinations, and work experience.

The examination appears to test the material covered in accounting programs of the better business schools. It also appears to be based upon the body of knowledge essential for the practice of public accounting and the audit of a medium-sized client. Since the examination is primarily a textbook or academic examination, you should plan on taking it as soon as possible after completing your accounting education.

### Examination Content

Guidance concerning topical content of the CPA exam can be found in a document prepared by the Board of Examiners of the AICPA entitled *Content and Skill Specifications for the Uniform CPA Exam*. We have included the content outlines in this volume by placing the corresponding outline for each section of the exam in the chapter containing related topical areas. These outlines should be used as an indication of the topics' relative emphasis on the exam.

The Board's objective in preparing this detailed listing of topics tested on the exam is to help "in assuring the continuing validity and reliability of the Uniform CPA Examination." These outlines are an excellent source of guidance concerning the areas and the emphasis to be given each area on future exams.

The Content and Skill Specification Outlines for the CPA examination, including the testing of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS™), went into effect January 1, 2011. In addition, the AICPA adopted CBT-e, which is a new computer platform. The major change from your standpoint is that simulations are smaller in size and a larger number of these "task-based simulations" are included on the Auditing and Attestation, Financial Accounting and Reporting, and Regulation exams. In addition, all questions that test writing skills are in the Business Environment and Concepts section. Note that a new set of Content and Skill Specifications became effective after January 1, 2013. However, the changes from the current Content and Skill Specifications are relatively minor.

A summary of the structure of the four sections of the CPA exam and time allocations is shown below.

#### Auditing and Attestation

- 3 Multiple-Choice Testlets containing a total of 90 questions
- 1 testlet containing 7 short Task-Based Simulations, including one research simulation 4 hours

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<sup>1</sup> More information may be obtained from the AICPA's *Uniform CPA Examination Candidate Bulletin*. You can find the publication on the AICPA's website at [www.cpa-exam.org](http://www.cpa-exam.org).

**Business Environment and Concepts (BEC)**

- 3 Multiple-choice Testlets containing a total of 72 questions
  - 3 Written Communication Tasks on BEC topics
- 3 hours

**Financial Accounting and Reporting**

- 3 Multiple-Choice Testlets containing a total of 90 questions
  - 1 Testlet containing 7 short Task-Based Simulations, including one research simulation
- 4 hours

**Regulation**

- 3 Multiple-Choice Testlets containing a total of 72 questions
  - 1 Testlet containing 6 short Task-Based Simulations, including one research simulation
- 3 hours

New accounting and auditing pronouncements, including those in the governmental and not-for-profit areas, are tested in the testing window starting six months after the pronouncement's *effective* date. If early application is permitted, a pronouncement is tested six months after the *issuance* date; candidates are responsible for the old pronouncement until it is superseded. The exam covers the Internal Revenue Code and federal tax regulations in effect six months before the beginning of the testing window. For the Business Law and Professional Responsibilities section, federal laws are tested six months following their *effective* date, and for uniform acts, one year after their adoption by a simple majority of jurisdictions. The AICPA posts content changes regularly on its Internet site. The address is [www.cpa-exam.org](http://www.cpa-exam.org).

**Nondisclosure and Computerization of Examination**

Beginning May 1996, the Uniform CPA Examination became nondisclosed. For each exam section, candidates are required to agree to a *Statement of Confidentiality*, which states that they will not divulge the nature and content of any exam question. In April of 2004, the CPA exam became computer-based. Candidates take the exam at Prometric sites in the 54 jurisdictions in which the CPA exam is offered. The CPA exam is offered continually during the testing windows shown below.

Testing Window (Exam Available)	January through February	April through May	July through August	October through November
AICPA Review & Update (Exam Unavailable)	March	June	September	December

One or more exam sections may be taken during any exam window, and the sections may be taken in any desired order. **However, no candidate will be allowed to sit for the same section more than once during any given testing window.** In addition, a candidate must pass all four sections of the CPA exam within a “rolling” eighteen-month period, which begins on the date he or she passes a section. In other words, you must pass the other three sections of the exam within eighteen months of when you pass the first section. If you do not pass all sections within the eighteen-month period, credit for any section(s) passed outside the eighteen-month period will expire and the section(s) must be retaken.

**Types of Questions**

The computer-based Uniform CPA Examination consists of three basic question formats.

1. Multiple-Choice—questions requiring the selection of one of four responses to a short scenario.
2. Simulations—case studies that are used to assess knowledge and skills in a context approximating that found on the job through the use of realistic scenarios and tasks, and access to normally available and familiar resources.
3. Written Communication tasks—questions that require you to write a short communication on Business Environment and Concepts topics.

The multiple-choice questions are much like the ones that have constituted a majority of the CPA examination for years. **And the good news is that these types of questions constitute about 65% of the total examination.** The

simulations and written communication tasks are new. However, we have attempted in this manual to use the latest available information to design study materials that will make you successful in answering task-based simulations and written communication questions. You should refer to the AICPA website ([www.cpa-exam.org](http://www.cpa-exam.org)) for the latest information about the format and content of this new type of question.

### Process for Sitting for the Examination

While there are some variations in the process from state to state, the basic process for sitting for the CPA examination may be described as follows:

1. Apply to take the examination (request, complete, and submit an application).
2. Payment of examination fees.
3. Candidates are required to review the tutorial and sample tests.
4. Receive your Notice to Schedule.
5. Schedule your examination.
6. Take your examination(s).
7. Receive your Score Report(s).

### Applying to Take the Examination

The right to practice public accounting as a CPA is governed by individual state statutes. While some rules regarding the practice of public accounting vary from state to state, all State Boards of Accountancy use the Uniform CPA Examination and AICPA advisory grading service as one of the requirements to practice public accounting. To obtain the latest information on requirements to apply and sit for the examination in the various states, every candidate should refer to the website of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) at [www.nasba.org](http://www.nasba.org). This website has information or links to sources of information about all of the jurisdictions.

A frequent problem candidates encounter is failure to apply by the deadline. **Apply to sit for the examination early. Also, you should use extreme care in filling out the application and mailing required materials to your State Board of Accountancy.** If possible, have a friend review your completed application before mailing with check and other documentation. The name on your application must appear exactly the same as it appears on the identification you plan to use at the testing center. Candidates miss a particular CPA examination window simply because of minor technical details that were overlooked (checks not signed, items not enclosed, question not answered on application, etc.). **Because of the very high volume of applications received in the more populous states, the administrative staff does not have time to call or write to correct minor details and will simply reject your application.**

### Exam Scheduling

Once you have been cleared to take the exam by the applicable state board, you will receive by mail a Notice to Schedule (NTS) and may then schedule to sit for one or more sections of the exam.

You have the following three options for scheduling your examination:

1. **Visit [www.prometric.com/cpa](http://www.prometric.com/cpa) on the Internet**

This is the easiest and quickest way to schedule an examination appointment (or cancel and reschedule an appointment, if necessary). Simply go to the website, select SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT, and follow the directions. It is advised that you print and keep for your records the confirmation number for your appointment.

2. **Call 800-580-9648 (Candidate Services Call Center)**

Before you call, you must have your NTS in front of you, and have in mind several times, dates, and locations that would work for you. You will not receive written confirmation of your appointment. Be sure to write down the date, time, and location, and confirmation number for each of your appointments.

### 3. Call your local test center

While this method is not recommended, you may call your local test center and schedule appointments. Again, be sure to have your NTS in front of you and write down the date, time, location, and confirmation number for each of your appointments.

You should also be aware that if you have to cancel or reschedule your appointment, you may be subject to a cancellation/rescheduling fee. The AICPA's *Uniform CPA Examination Candidate Bulletin* lists the rescheduling and cancellation fees.

**To assure that you get your desired location and time period, it is imperative that you schedule early. To get your first choice of dates, you are advised to schedule at least 45 days in advance. You will not be scheduled for an exam fewer than 5 days before testing.**

## ATTRIBUTES OF EXAMINATION SUCCESS

Your primary objective in preparing for the CPA examination is to pass. Other objectives such as learning new and reviewing old material should be considered secondary. The six attributes of examination success discussed below are **essential**. You should study the attributes and work toward achieving/developing each of them **before** taking the examination.

### 1. Knowledge of Material

Two points are relevant to "knowledge of material" as an attribute of examination success. **First**, there is a distinct difference between being familiar with material and knowing the material. Frequently candidates confuse familiarity with knowledge. Can you remember when you just could not answer an examination question or did poorly on an examination, but maintained to yourself or your instructor that you knew the material? You probably were only familiar with the material. On the CPA examination, familiarity is insufficient; you must know the material. For example, you may be familiar with the concepts in accounting for leases, but can you compute the present value of an annuity due under a lease agreement and record entries for the lessee and lessor? Once again, a very major concern must be to know the material rather than just being familiar with it. Knowledgeable discussion of the material is required on the CPA examination. **Second**, the Uniform Certified Public Accountant Examination tests a literally overwhelming amount of material at a rigorous level. The CPA examination includes material from the following courses:

#### Accounting

- Auditing (including Auditing with Technology and Audit Sampling)
- International Auditing Standards
- Intermediate Financial
- Advanced Financial
- International Financial Reporting Standards
- Cost/Managerial
- Governmental and Not-for-Profit
- Tax

#### Business Law

- Accounting Information Systems
- Management Information Systems
- Finance
- Economics
- Corporate Governance
- Enterprise Risk Management
- Project Management
- Budgeting and Measurement
- Production Operations
- Management

**Furthermore**, as noted earlier, the CPA exam will test new material, sometimes as early as six months after issuance. In other words, you are not only responsible for material in the above courses, but also for all new developments in each of these areas.

This text contains outlines of accounting topics from FASB pronouncements, financial accounting courses, cost accounting courses, finance courses, etc. Return to the original material (e.g., professional standards, your accounting and business textbooks, etc.) only if the outlines do not reinforce topical areas you already know.

## 2. Commitment to Exam Preparation

Your preparation for the CPA exam should begin at least two months prior to the date you plan to schedule your seating for an exam section. If you plan to take more than one section, you should start earlier. Over the course of your preparation, you will experience many peaks and valleys. There will be days when you feel completely prepared and there will also be days when you feel totally overwhelmed. This is not unusual and, in fact, should be expected.

The CPA exam is a very difficult and challenging exam. How many times in your college career did you study months for an exam? Probably not too many. Therefore, candidates need to remain focused on the objective—succeeding on the CPA exam.

Develop a personal study plan so that you are reviewing material daily. Of course, you should schedule an occasional study break to help you relax, but don't schedule too many breaks. Candidates who dedicate themselves to studying have a much greater chance of going through this process one time. On the other hand, a lack of focus and piecemeal preparation will only extend the process over a number of exam sittings.

## 3. Solutions Approach

The solutions approach is a systematic approach to solving the questions and simulations found on the CPA examination. Many candidates know the material fairly well when they sit for the CPA exam, but they do not know how to take the examination. Candidates generally neither work nor answer questions efficiently in terms of time or grades. The solutions approach permits you to avoid drawing “blanks” on CPA exam questions; using the solutions approach coupled with grading insights (see below) allows you to pick up a sizable number of points on test material with which you are not familiar. Chapter 3 outlines the solutions approach for multiple-choice questions, simulations, and written communication questions.

## 4. Grading Insights

Your score on each section of the exam is determined by the sum of points assigned to individual multiple-choice questions, simulations, and written communication questions. Thus, you must attempt to maximize your points on each individual item.

The number of points assigned to a multiple-choice question varies depending upon its difficulty level—easy, medium, or hard. **In other words, you will receive more points for correctly answering a hard question than correctly answering an easy question.** Multiple-choice questions are organized in 24- to 30-question testlets, and each testlet includes questions from all of the content areas of the particular section.

With respect to the multiple-choice testlets, the CPA exam uses a form of adaptive testing known as multistage testing. Using this technique, the average difficulty of subsequent testlet(s) is determined by how the candidate has performed on the previous testlet(s). Therefore, if you get a testlet with a preponderance of very difficult questions, do not become discouraged. It may mean that you performed very well on the previous testlet(s). In addition, since the number of points assigned to hard or medium questions will be greater than the number of points assigned to easy questions, you have an opportunity to accumulate a large number of total points on that testlet.

Each multiple-choice testlet contains “operational” and “pretest” questions. The operational questions are the only ones that are used to determine your score. Pretest questions are not scored; they are being tested for future use as operational questions. However, you have no way of knowing which questions are operational and which questions are pretest questions. Therefore, you must approach each question as if it will be used to determine your grade.

Task-based simulations include more extensive scenarios and requirements. For example, the requirements may involve calculations, spreadsheet completion, journal entries, or research. The points assigned to the requirements

will vary according to their difficulty. The task-based simulations make use of a number of commonly used tools such as spreadsheets and electronic research databases. Therefore, you need to become proficient in the use of these tools to maximize your score on the simulations. Task-based simulations will also include “pretest” items that are not counted in your score.

Finally, written communication questions, on the Business Environment and Concepts section, are worth about 5% each, or a total of approximately 15% of that section’s score.

CPA Exam scores are reported on a scale from 0 to 99. The total score is not a percent correct score. It is a combination of scores from the multiple-choice and simulation portions of the exam considering the relative difficulty of the items. A total score of 75 is required to pass each section.

The AICPA included a tutorial and sample examinations on its website that allow you to get experience with the use of the actual computer tools used on the CPA exam. Also, more experience with computer testing can be obtained by using *Wiley CPA Exam Review Practice Software*.

## 5. Examination Strategy

Prior to sitting for the examination, it is important to develop an examination strategy (i.e., an approach to working efficiently throughout the exam). Your ability to cope successfully with the examination can be improved by

- a. Recognizing the importance and usefulness of an examination strategy
- b. Using Chapter 4, Taking the Examination, and previous examination experience to develop a “personal strategy” for the exam
- c. Testing your “personal strategy” on example examinations under conditions similar to those at the test centers (using similar tools and databases and with a time limit)

## 6. Examination Confidence

You need confidence to endure the physical and mental demands of 3 to 4 hours of test-taking under tremendous pressure. Examination confidence results from proper preparation for the exam, which includes mastering the first four attributes of examination success. Examination confidence is necessary to enable you to overcome the initial frustration with problems for which you may not be specifically prepared.

This study manual (in conjunction with Volume 2), when properly used, contributes to your examination confidence. The systematic outlines herein will provide you with a sense of organization such that as you sit for the examination, you will feel reasonably prepared (it is impossible to be completely prepared).

## Common Candidate Mistakes

The CPA Exam is a formidable hurdle in your accounting career. With a first-time pass rate of only about 45% on each section, the level of difficulty is obvious. The authors believe that the first-time pass rate could be higher if candidates would be more careful. Eight common mistakes that many candidates make are

1. Failure to understand the exam question requirements
2. Misunderstanding the supporting text of the problem
3. Lack of knowledge of material tested, especially recently issued pronouncements
4. Failure to develop proficiency with practice tools such as electronic research databases and spreadsheets
5. Inability to apply the solutions approach
6. Lack of an exam strategy (e.g., allocation of time)
7. Sloppiness and computational errors
8. Failure to proofread and edit

These mistakes are not mutually exclusive. Candidates may commit one or more of the above items. Remind yourself that when you decrease the number of common mistakes, you increase your chances of successfully becoming a CPA. Take the time to read carefully the exam question requirements. Do not jump into a quick start, only to later find out that you did not understand what information the examiners were asking for. Read slowly and carefully. Take time to recall your knowledge. Respond to the question asked. Apply an exam strategy such as allocating your time among all question formats. Do not spend too much time on the multiple-choice testlets, leaving no time to spend on prepar-



ing your simulation responses. Upon completion of any written communications requirements, proofread and edit your answer. Answer questions quickly but precisely, avoid common mistakes, and increase your score.

## PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS REVIEW TEXTBOOK

Volume 1 and Volume 2 of *CPA Examination Review* are designed to help you prepare adequately for the examination. There is no easy approach to prepare for the successful completion of the CPA Examination; however, through the use of Volumes 1 and 2, your approach will be systematic and logical.

The objective of Volume 1 is to provide study materials supportive to CPA candidates. While no guarantees are made concerning the success of those using this text, this book promotes efficient preparation by

1. Explaining how to **maximize your score** through analysis of examination grading and illustration of the solutions approach.
2. **Defining areas tested** through the use of the content specification outlines. Note that predictions of future exams are not made. You should prepare yourself for all possible topics rather than gambling on the appearance of certain questions.
3. **Organizing your study program** by comprehensively outlining all of the subject matter tested on the examination in 48 easy-to-use study modules. Each study module is a manageable task which facilitates your exam preparation. Turn to the table of contents and peruse it to get a feel for the organization of this volume.

As you read the next few paragraphs that describe the contents of this book (Volume 1), flip through the chapters to gain a general familiarity with the book's organization and contents. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will help you maximize your score.

Chapter 2	Examination Grading
Chapter 3	The Solutions Approach
Chapter 4	Taking the Examination

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 contain material that should be kept in mind throughout your study program. Refer back to them frequently. Reread them for a final time just before you sit for the exam.

The remaining sections, Auditing and Attestation, Financial Accounting and Reporting, Regulation, and Business Environment and Concepts, each contain

1. AICPA Content Specification Outlines
2. Outlines of material tested on that section of the examination

The first objective of Volume 2 is to provide CPA candidates with previous examination questions and author-developed questions and simulations organized by topic (e.g., audit reports, secured transactions, consolidations, etc.). Volume 2 includes over 2,700 multiple-choice questions, many from previous exams. Multiple-choice questions are an effective means of studying the material tested on the exam. It is also necessary, however, to work with problems and simulations to develop the solutions approach (the ability to solve CPA simulations efficiently).

The second objective of Volume 2 is to provide CPA candidates with an explanation for the answers to the multiple-choice questions and simulations.

## Other Textbooks

This text is a comprehensive compilation of study guides and outlines; it should not be necessary to supplement them with textbooks and other materials for most topics. You probably already have accounting, business law, economics, finance, accounting information systems, and tax textbooks. In such a case, you must make the decision whether to replace them and trade familiarity (including notes therein, etc.), with the cost and inconvenience of obtaining the newer texts containing a more updated presentation.

Before spending time and money acquiring new texts, begin your study program with this book to determine your need for a supplemental text.

## Ordering Other Materials

Professional materials for study may be ordered from the AICPA at

AICPA (CPA2Biz)

Telephone: 888-777-7077

Website: [www.CPA2Biz.com](http://www.CPA2Biz.com)

The AICPA offers candidates a free six-month online subscription to the professional literature to help them prepare for the exam. The package costs includes the Web electronic versions of

- AICPA professional standards
- FASB Original Pronouncements
- FASB Accounting Standards Codification

Candidates may subscribe at [www.cpa-exam.org](http://www.cpa-exam.org). Only candidates who have applied to take the exam may take advantage of this offer.

The PCAOB website at [www.pcaobus.org](http://www.pcaobus.org) has the AICPA auditing standards that the PCAOB adopted as its interim standards. It also has the standards it has adopted subsequently.

A variety of supplemental CPA products are available from John Wiley & Sons, Inc. By using a variety of learning techniques, such as software and audio CDs, the candidate is more likely to remain focused during the study process and to retain information for a longer period of time. Visit our website at [www.wiley.com/cpa](http://www.wiley.com/cpa) for other products, supplements, and updates.

## Working CPA Problems

The AICPA Content Outlines, study outlines, etc., in Volume 1 will be used to acquire and assimilate the knowledge tested on the examination. This, however, should be only **one-half** of your preparation program. The other half should be spent practicing how to work problems using Volume 2, "Problems and Solutions."

Most candidates probably spend over 90% of their time reviewing material tested on the CPA exam. Much more time should be allocated to working questions and simulations **under exam conditions**. Working potential examination questions serves two functions. First, it helps you develop a solutions approach as well as solutions that will maximize your score. Second, it provides the best test of your knowledge of the material.

The multiple-choice questions and answer explanations can be used in many ways. First, they may be used as a diagnostic evaluation of your knowledge. For example, before beginning to review commercial paper you may wish to answer 10 to 15 multiple-choice questions to determine your ability to answer CPA examination questions on commercial paper. The apparent difficulty of the questions and the correctness of your answers will allow you to determine the necessary breadth and depth of your review. Additionally, exposure to examination questions prior to review and study of the material should provide motivation. You will develop a feel for your level of proficiency and an understanding of the scope and difficulty of past examination questions. Moreover, your review materials will explain concepts encountered in the diagnostic multiple-choice questions.

Second, the multiple-choice questions can be used as a poststudy or postreview evaluation. You should attempt to understand all concepts mentioned (even in incorrect answers) as you answer the questions. Refer to the explanation of the answer for discussion of the alternatives even though you selected the correct response. Thus, you should read the explanation of the answer unless you completely understand the question and all of the alternative answers.

Third, you may wish to use the multiple-choice questions as a primary study vehicle. This is probably the quickest but least thorough approach to preparing for the exam. Make a sincere effort to understand the question and to select the correct response before referring to the unofficial answer and explanation. In many cases, the explanations will appear inadequate because of your unfamiliarity with the topic. Always refer back to an appropriate study source, such as the outlines and text in this volume, your textbooks, professional standards, etc.

The multiple-choice questions significantly outnumber the task-based simulations in this book. This is similar to the content of the new computer-based examination. One problem with so many multiple-choice questions is that you may overemphasize them. Candidates generally prefer to work multiple-choice questions because they are

1. Shorter and less time-consuming
2. Solvable with less effort
3. Less frustrating than simulations

Another problem with the large number of multiple-choice questions is that you may tend to become overly familiar with the questions. The result may be that you begin reading the facts and assumptions of previously studied questions into the questions on your examination. Guard against this potential problem by reading each multiple-choice question with **extra** care.

Beginning with the April 2004 computer-based examination, the AICPA began testing with simulations, and in 2011 the AICPA moved to shorter task-based simulations and written communication tasks. Simulations released by the AICPA or prepared by the authors, many adopted from prior CPA exam questions and problems, are in Volume 2, “Problems and Solutions.” You should also spend significant amount of your study time working these types of questions.

The questions and solutions in Volume 2 provide you with an opportunity to diagnose and correct any exam-taking weaknesses prior to sitting for the examination. Continually analyze your incorrect solutions to determine the cause of the error(s) during your preparation for the exam. Treat each incorrect solution as a mistake that will not be repeated (especially on the examination). Also attempt to generalize your weaknesses so that you may change, reinforce, or develop new approaches to exam preparation and exam taking.

## SELF-STUDY PROGRAM

CPA candidates generally find it difficult to organize and to complete their own self-study programs. A major problem is determining **what** and **how** to study. Another major problem is developing the self-discipline to stick to a study program. Relatedly, it is often difficult for CPA candidates to determine how much to study (i.e., determining when they are sufficiently prepared).

The following suggestions will assist you in developing a **systematic, comprehensive, and successful** self-study program to help you complete the exam.

Remember that these are only suggestions. You should modify them to suit your personality, available study time, and other constraints. Some of the suggestions may appear trivial, but CPA candidates generally need all the assistance they can get to systemize their study programs.

### Study Facilities and Available Time

Locate study facilities that will be conducive to concentrated study. Factors that you should consider include

1. Noise distraction
2. Interruptions
3. Lighting
4. Availability (e.g., a local library is not available at 5:00 A.M.)
5. Accessibility (e.g., your kitchen table vs. your local library)
6. Desk or table space
7. Availability of research resources

You will probably find different study facilities optimal for different times (e.g., your kitchen table during early morning hours and local libraries during early evening hours).

Next review your personal and professional commitments from now until the exam to determine regularly available study time. Formalize a schedule to which you can reasonably commit yourself. At the end of this chapter, you will find a detailed approach to managing your time available for the exam preparation program.

### Self-Evaluation

The *CPA Examination Review* self-study program is partitioned into 48 topics or modules. Since each module is clearly defined and should be studied separately, you have the task of preparing for the CPA exam partitioned into 48

manageable tasks. Partitioning the overall project into 48 modules makes preparation psychologically easier, since you sense yourself completing one small step at a time rather than seemingly never completing one or a few large steps.

By completing the following “Preliminary Estimate of Your Knowledge of Subject” inventory, organized by the 48 modules in this program, you will have a tabulation of your strong and weak areas at the beginning of your study program. This will help you budget your limited study time. Note that you should begin studying the material in each module by answering up to 1/4 of the total multiple-choice questions in Volume 2 covering that module’s topics. This “mini-exam” should constitute a diagnostic evaluation as to the amount of review and study you need.

**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF YOUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Module</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Fairly proficient</b>	<b>Generally familiar</b>	<b>Not familiar</b>
	<b>AUDITING AND ATTESTATION</b>				
1	Professional Responsibilities				
2	Engagement Planning and Understanding				
3	Understanding Internal Control				
4	Responding to Risk Assessment				
5	Reporting				
6	Accounting & Review Services				
7	Audit Sampling				
8	Auditing with Technology				
	<b>FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING</b>				
9	Basic Theory and Financial Reporting				
10	Inventory				
11	Fixed Assets				
12	Monetary Current Assets and Current Liabilities				
13	Present Value				
14	Deferred Taxes				
15	Stockholders’ Equity				
16	Investments				
17	Statement of Cash Flows				
18	Business Combinations and Consolidations				
19	Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities				
20	Miscellaneous				
21	Governmental Accounting				
22	Not-for-Profit Accounting				
	<b>REGULATION</b>				
23	Professional and Legal Responsibilities				
24	Federal Securities Acts				
25	Business Structure				
26	Contracts				
27	Sales				
28	Commercial Paper				
29	Secured Transactions				
30	Bankruptcy				
31	Debtor-Creditor Relationships				
32	Agency				
33	Regulation of Business				
34	Property				
35	Taxes: Individual				
36	Taxes: Transactions in Property				
37	Taxes: Partnership				
38	Taxes: Corporate				
39	Taxes: Other Taxation Topics				

	BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND CONCEPTS				
41	Information Technology				
42	Economics, Strategy, and Globalization				
43	Financial Risk Management and Capital Budgeting				
44	Financial Management				
45	Performance Measures				
46	Cost Measurement				
47	Planning, Control, and Analysis				

### Using Note Cards

Key definitions, formulas, lists, etc., can be summarized on note cards to illustrate important concepts. Candidates can organize the note cards into four sections: AUDITING AND ATTESTATION, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING, REGULATION, AND BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND CONCEPTS. During your study program, you can frequently review your note cards to refresh your memory on certain topics and evaluate your progress. The following examples illustrate one candidate's note cards on various exam topics.

#### Financial Accounting and Reporting

<i>Investments &lt; 20%</i>
<i>Held-to-Maturity: Amortized Cost</i>
<i>Trading: Fair Market Value</i>
<i>Δs recognized in I/S</i>
<i>Available-for-sale: FMV</i>
<i>Δs during a period recognized in other comprehensive income</i>

<u>Accounting Changes</u>			
	<u>Cum.</u> <u>effect</u>	<u>Pro</u> <u>forma</u>	<u>Restate</u> <u>FS</u>
Δ in estimate	N	N	N
Δ in principle	Y	Y	N
Δ in reporting Entity	N	N	Y

Prepared by Greg Graber, CPA, former student, Northern Illinois University

#### Business Environment and Concepts

<i>Cost-Volume-Profit</i>	
<i>Sales - Var Exp - Fixed Exp = Profit</i>	
<i>Breakeven Point</i>	
<i>In units =</i>	$\frac{\text{Fixed Exp}}{\text{Cont Mar/Unit}}$
<i>In Sales \$ =</i>	$\frac{\text{Fixed Exp}}{\text{Cont Mar \%}}$

<i>Cash Management</i>		
<i>Lock box</i>	<i>Recpt.</i>	<i>Receipts directly to bank</i>
<i>Concentration banking</i>	<i>Recpt.</i>	<i>Branches use local banks</i>
<i>Zero-balance accounts</i>	<i>Disb.</i>	<i>Transferring funds to cover checks</i>
<i>Electronic funds transfer</i>	<i>Disb. or Rec.</i>	<i>Transfer of funds electronically</i>

Prepared by Greg Graber, CPA, former student, Northern Illinois University

**Auditing and Attestation***Tolerable Misstatement**Max \$ Misstatement for a bal.**Audit Risk: Risk of the existence of a monetary misstatement greater than the tolerable misstatement Nonsampling Risk:*

- *Wrong audit procedure*
- *Audit error*

*(cont'd)**Sampling Risk – May cause result diff. than pop. as a whole.*

- *Substantive Tests*
  - 1) *Incorrect accep. B*
  - 2) *Incorrect rejec. a*
- *Tests of Controls*
  - 1) *Risk of assessing control risk too low (overreliance)*
  - 2) *Risk of assessing control risk too high (underreliance)*

Prepared by Rebecca A. Hoger, CPA, former student, Northern Illinois University

**Regulation***Negotiable Instrument*

- 1) *In writing (semipermeable moveable form)*
- 2) *Signed by appropriate person*
- 3) *Unconditional promise to pay sum certain in money*
- 4) *Words of negotiability*
- 5) *No second promise (collateral-ok)*
- 6) *Payable on demand or at definite date*

*Elements of a binding agreement*

- 1) *Manifestation of mutual assent*
  - a. *Offer*
  - b. *Acceptance*
- 2) *Reality of consent*
- 3) *Consideration*
- 4) *Capacity of parties*
- 5) *Legality of object*
- 6) *Compliance with Statute of Frauds*

Prepared by Cindy Johnson, CPA, former student, Northern Illinois University

**Level of Proficiency Required**

What level of proficiency must you develop with respect to each of the topics to pass the exam? You should work toward a minimum correct rate on the multiple-choice questions of 75 to 80%.

Warning: Disproportional study time devoted to multiple-choice (relative to simulation questions/ problems) can be disastrous on the exam. You should work a substantial number of problems and simulations under exam conditions, even though multiple-choice questions are easier to work and are used to gauge your proficiency. The authors believe that practicing simulations and problems will also improve your proficiency on the multiple-choice questions.

**Multiple-Choice Feedback**

One of the benefits of working through previous exam questions is that it helps you to identify your weak areas. Once you have graded your answers, your strong areas and weak areas should be clearly evident. Yet, the important point here is that you should not stop at a simple percentage evaluation. The percentage only provides general feedback about your knowledge of the material contained within that particular module. The percentage **does not** give you any specific feedback regarding the concepts which were tested. In order to get this feedback, you should look at the questions missed on an individual basis because this will help you gain a better understanding of **why** you missed the question.

This feedback process has been facilitated by the fact that within each module where the multiple-choice answer key appears, two blank lines have been inserted next to the multiple-choice answers. As you grade the multiple-choice

questions, mark those questions which you have missed. However, instead of just marking the questions right and wrong, you should now focus on marking the questions in a manner which identifies **why** you missed the question. As an example, a candidate could mark the questions in the following manner: ✓ for math mistakes, X for conceptual mistakes, and ? for areas which the candidate was unfamiliar with. The candidate should then correct these mistakes by reworking through the marked questions.

The objective of this marking technique is to help you identify your weak areas and thus, the concepts which you should be focusing on. While it is still important for you to get between 75% and 80% correct when working multiple-choice questions, it is more important for you to understand the concepts. This understanding applies to both the questions answered correctly and those answered incorrectly. Remember, questions on the CPA exam will be different from the questions in the book; however, the concepts will be the same. Therefore, your preparation should focus on understanding concepts, not just getting the correct answer.

### Conditional Candidates

If you have received conditional status on the examination, you must concentrate on the remaining section(s). Unfortunately, many candidates do not study after conditioning the exam, relying on luck to get them through the remaining section(s). Conditional candidates will find that material contained in Chapters 1-4 and the information contained in the appropriate modules will benefit them in preparing for the remaining section(s) of the examination.

## PLANNING FOR THE EXAMINATION

### Overall Strategy

An overriding concern should be an orderly, systematic approach toward both your preparation program and your examination strategy. A major objective should be to avoid any surprises or anything else that would rattle you during the examination. In other words, you want to be in complete control as much as possible. Control is of paramount importance from both positive and negative viewpoints. The presence of control on your part will add to your confidence and your ability to prepare for and take the exam. Moreover, the presence of control will make your preparation program more enjoyable (or at least less distasteful). On the other hand, a lack of organization will result in inefficiency in preparing and taking the examination, with a highly predictable outcome. Likewise, distractions during the examination (e.g., inadequate lodging, lack of sleep) are generally disastrous.

In summary, establishing a systematic, orderly approach to taking the examination is of paramount importance. Follow these six steps:

1. Develop an overall strategy at the beginning of your preparation program (see below).
2. Supplement your overall strategy with outlines of material tested on the exam.
3. Supplement your overall strategy with an explicitly stated set of problem-solving procedures—the solutions approach.
4. Supplement your overall strategy with an explicitly stated approach to each examination session (see Chapter 4).
5. Evaluate your preparation progress on a regular basis and prepare lists of things “to do” (see Weekly Review of Preparation Program Progress on the following page).
6. **Relax:** You can pass the exam. About 20,000 candidates successfully complete the exam each year. You will be one of them if you complete an efficient preparation program and execute well (i.e., use your solutions approach and exam strategy) while writing the exam.

The following outline is designed to provide you with a general framework of the tasks before you. You should tailor the outline to your needs by adding specific items and comments.

#### A. Preparation Program (refer to Self-Study Program discussed previously)

1. Obtain and organize study materials.
2. Locate facilities conducive for studying and block out study time.
3. Concentrate your study on one or two sections per exam window. Do not attempt to take more than two sections per window.

4. Develop your solutions approach (including solving simulations and problems as well as multiple-choice questions).
5. Prepare an examination strategy.
6. Study the material tested recently and prepare answers to actual exam questions on these topics under examination conditions.
7. Periodically evaluate your progress.

#### B. Physical Arrangements

1. Apply to and obtain acceptance from your state board.
2. Reserve lodging for examination nights.

#### C. Taking the Examination (covered in detail in Chapter 4)

1. Become familiar with exam facilities and procedures.
2. Implement examination strategies and the solutions approach.

### Weekly Review of Preparation Program Progress

The following pages contain a hypothetical weekly review of program progress for the Financial Accounting and Reporting section. You should prepare a similar progress chart. This procedure, which takes only about 5 minutes per week, will help you proceed through a more efficient, complete preparation program.

Make notes of materials and topics

1. That you have studied
2. That you have completed
3. That need additional study

Weeks to go	Comments on progress, "to do" items, etc.
12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Read Basic Theory and Financial Reporting Module</li> <li>2) Made notecards</li> <li>3) Worked the MC Questions and Task-based simulations, on a sample basis</li> <li>4) Need to work Task-Based Simulations using the solutions approach</li> </ol>
11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Read Fixed Assets and Stockholders' Equity Modules</li> <li>2) Made notecards</li> <li>3) Read the SFAS and APB outlines that correspond to these topics</li> <li>4) Briefly looked over the MC for both modules</li> </ol>
10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Read Monetary Current Assets and Current Liabilities Module</li> <li>2) Made notecards</li> <li>3) Read the corresponding SFAS/APB outlines</li> <li>4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations for Fixed Assets, Stockholders' Equity, and Monetary CA/CL</li> </ol>
9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Read the Inventory and Statement of Cash Flows Modules</li> <li>2) Made notecards</li> <li>3) Skimmed the SFAS and APB outlines, taking notes of important areas</li> <li>4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations</li> </ol>



8	1) Read the Present Value Module
	2) Made notecards
	3) Studied the SFASs and APBs on leases and pensions
	4) Completed the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations
7	1) Read Deferred Taxes Module
	2) Made notecards
	3) Read the corresponding SFAS and APB outlines
	4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations
6	1) Read the Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities and Miscellaneous Modules
	2) Made notecards
	3) Read the corresponding SFAS and APB outlines
	4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations for these modules
	5) Confident with these mods; only need a quick review
5	1) Read Investments Module
	2) Made notecards
	3) Read the corresponding SFAS and APB outlines
	4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations
4	1) Read the Business Combinations and Consolidations Module
	2) Reviewed consolidations in an advanced accounting textbook
	3) Made notecards
	4) Worked the MC Questions and Task-Based Simulations
3	1) Took Financial Accounting and Reporting Sample Exam
2	1) Reviewed all prior topics, picking out a few MC for each topic and working them out
	2) Did a statement of cash flows
1	1) Reviewed notecards and SFAS and APB outlines
	2) Worked MC from Deferred Taxes and Stockholders' Equity Modules
0	1) Tried to relax and review topics

### Time Management of Your Preparation

As you begin your CPA exam preparation, you obviously realize that there is a large amount of material to cover over the course of the next two to three months. Therefore, it is very important for you to organize your calendar, and maybe even your daily routine, so that you can allocate sufficient time to studying. An organized approach to your preparation is much more effective than a last week cram session. An organized approach also builds up the confidence necessary to succeed on the CPA exam.

An approach which we have already suggested is to develop weekly “to do” lists. This technique helps you to establish intermediate objectives and goals as you progress through your study plan. You can then focus your efforts on small tasks and not feel overwhelmed by the entire process. And as you accomplish these tasks you will see yourself moving one step closer to realizing the overall goal, succeeding on the CPA exam.

Note, however, that the underlying assumption of this approach is that you have found the time during the week to study and thus accomplish the different tasks. Although this is an obvious step, it is still a very important step. Your exam preparation should be of a continuous nature and not one that jumps around the calendar. Therefore, you should strive to find available study time within your daily schedule, which can be utilized on a consistent basis. For example, everyone has certain hours of the day which are already committed for activities such as jobs, classes, and, of course, sleep. There is also going to be the time you spend relaxing because CPA candidates should try to maintain some balance in their lives. Sometimes too much studying can be counterproductive. But there will be some time available to you for studying and working through the questions. Block off this available time and use it only for exam prep. Use the time to accomplish your weekly tasks and to keep yourself committed to the process. After awhile your preparation will develop into a habit and the preparation will not seem as overwhelming as it once did.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT**