A photograph of three young women sitting around a wooden desk in a bright, modern study environment. They are looking at a laptop screen together. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow sweater, the woman in the middle is wearing a dark red jacket over a grey top, and the woman on the right is wearing a green sweater. There are several open books and papers on the desk. The background shows a bookshelf and a window with blinds.

# *Choosing* **THE RIGHT** *CPA Review Course*

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT CPA REVIEW COURSE

INTRODUCTION	02
TIME INVESTMENT	04
YOUR LEARNING STYLE	07
COURSE COMPONENTS	09
PROVIDER FEATURES	20
CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COACHING	24
REVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS	25
INDUSTRY LONGEVITY	26
VALUE	27
LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE CPA EXAM	28

# INTRODUCTION

*So, you want to become a CPA? Excellent! Earning your CPA certification can increase your salary, provide new and better career opportunities, and increase your prestige at your firm. Earning the CPA is a career move you won't regret.*

The most difficult part of earning the CPA certification is passing the CPA Exam, which consists of four sections:

**AUD** Auditing and Attestation

**BEC** Business Environment and Concepts

**FAR** Financial Accounting and Reporting

**REG** Regulation

Each section has a number of Multiple-Choice Questions and Task-Based Simulations that evaluate knowledge from across the accounting spectrum. The organization that develops the CPA Exam, the AICPA, produces Exam Blueprints—incredibly detailed, multi-page breakdowns of each section—to provide insight into what the exam tests. But the fact is, an individual studying for the exam alone using these Blueprints as a guide will spend almost as much time figuring out what to study as they will actually preparing for the test.

The CPA Exam pass rate consistently hovers around 50%, which means half of the people who take the exam DO NOT PASS. That's why, to prepare for the CPA Exam, you should study with a CPA review course. All major review providers have staff devoted to mastering all aspects of the exam, including the Blueprints, so all you have to do is follow their program.



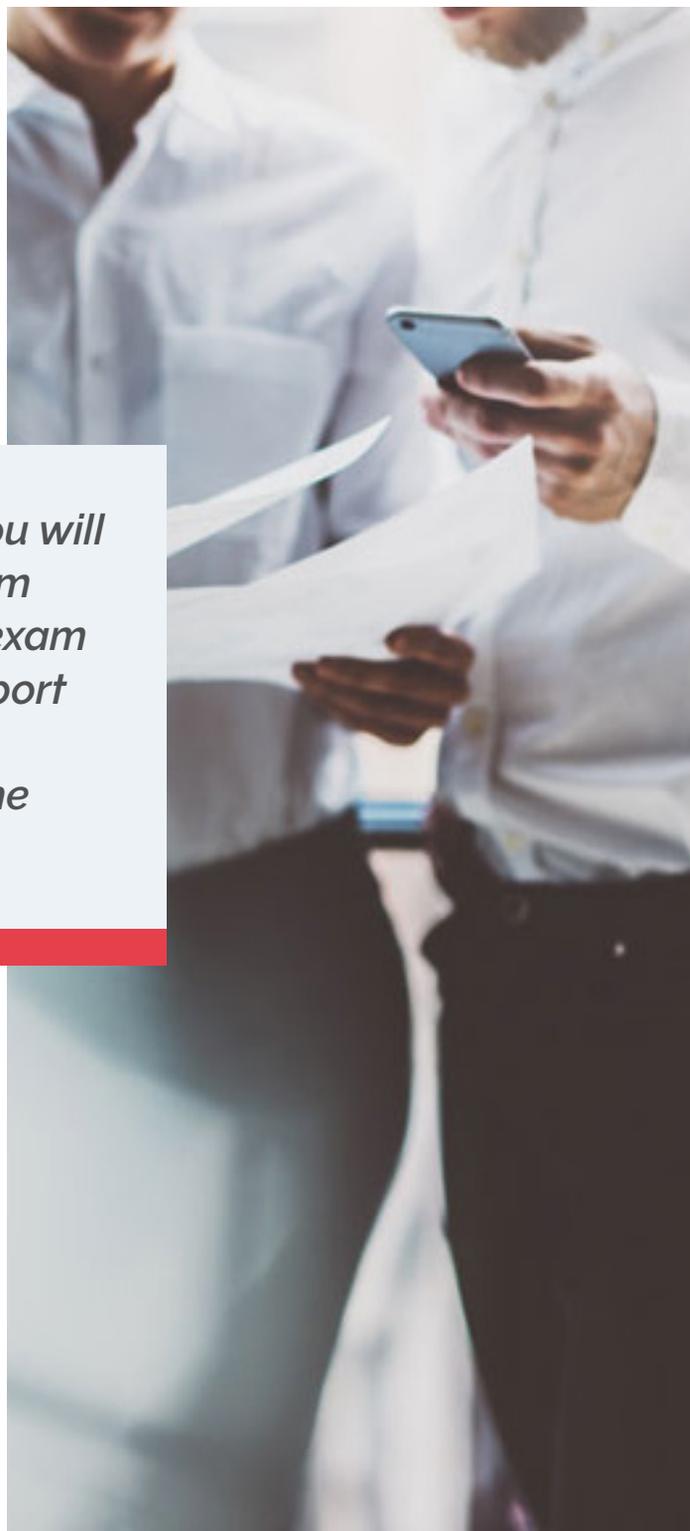
The products they offer may seem expensive, but consider this: The future of your career hinges on a multi-hour, multi-part exam that can take a year or more to complete, and you're just as likely to pass as you are to fail. You're going to want someone in your corner.

Relying on a CPA review course is the best way to achieve your exam goals, but which is the best CPA review course for you?

*A CPA review course guarantees you will become familiar with all of the exam content, get comfortable with the exam environment, receive plenty of support and assistance, stick to your study schedule, and stay up to date on the latest exam news.*

Before you invest in a review course, consider the following criteria. Each represents an essential component of your CPA Exam success:

- *Time Investment*
- *Your Learning Style*
- *Course Components*
- *Provider Features*
- *Customer Service and Coaching*
- *Reviews and Testimonials*
- *Industry Longevity*
- *Value*



# TIME INVESTMENT

*The CPA Exam is challenging, and one factor contributing to its difficulty level is the amount of time required to prepare for and pass the exam.*



The average amount of study time required to be completely ready **for each exam section is 160 hours**. Most successful candidates invest over 500 total hours into their preparations for all four exam sections.



**20 HRS/WEEK**

If you can create and stick to a realistic CPA Exam study plan requiring you to study for 20 hours a week, you can finish your review for one section in about two months.



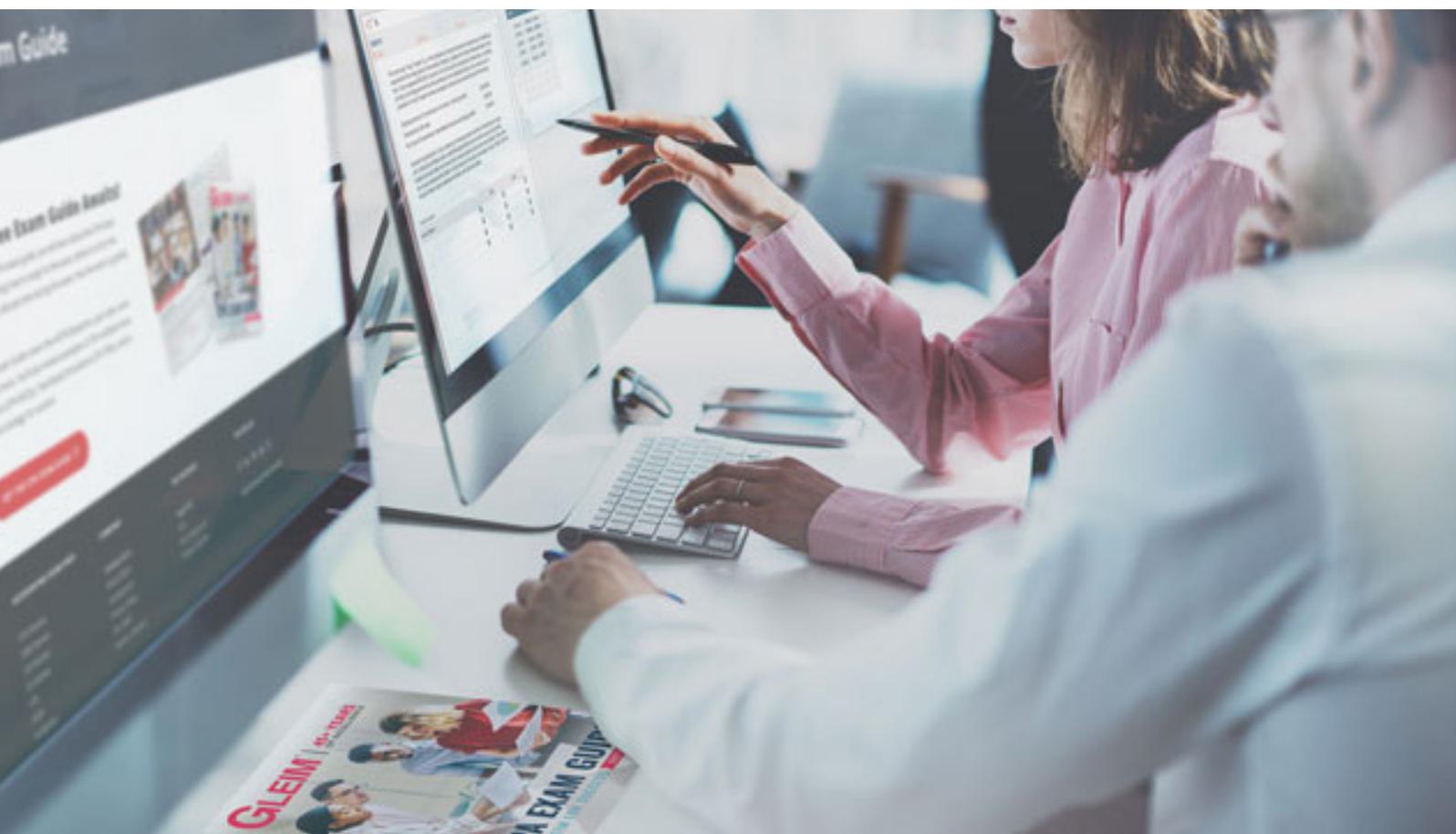
**12-15 HRS/WEEK**

If studying 12-15 hours a week is more doable for you, you can be primed to pass one section in about three months.

**MOST SUCCESSFUL  
CANDIDATES INVEST  
OVER 500 TOTAL  
HOURS INTO THEIR  
PREPARATIONS FOR ALL  
FOUR EXAM SECTIONS.**

Both of these example schedules allow you to pass all parts of the CPA Exam in just one year. Of course, the actual amount of time it takes depends on several factors, such as how familiar you are with the material, how much time has elapsed since you earned your degree, and how much time you have to study.

Some providers advertise average study times drastically lower than those of other courses (and sometimes even lower than what the AICPA recommends). Cram courses or an accelerated schedule work for some people, but not others. The fact is that there are only so many corners you can cut and still pass. To make the most of your study time, choose a CPA review provider that can completely and efficiently cover all of the content.



## Review providers advertising low study times often do one or both of the following:

### 01 Cover only the content they think is likely to be tested.

Occasionally, review providers try to anticipate which areas of the CPA Exam Blueprints will be featured more heavily on the exam than others. They then reduce or completely omit any content they consider unnecessary for candidates to review. While this practice may help candidates get through their courses faster, it often does not adequately prepare candidates for the CPA Exam. While these types of shortcuts may save time initially, they can cost you time later if you have to retake one or more sections.

### 02 Develop courses directing candidates to study only what they don't know.

Another way providers lower study times is by offering courses that feature adaptive technology that only focuses future review of weak topic areas. Adaptive technology can help you study more efficiently by specifically targeting your weak areas, but it should also help you maintain your knowledge levels in areas you have shown mastery. As long as these courses prioritize mastery of the material over speed, they can help candidates pass each section the first time and accelerate their CPA Exam success. The efficacy of this strategy largely depends on the quality of the provider's adaptive system. Some use run-of-the-mill systems to make their courses "adaptive," while others develop their own proprietary systems that are tailored to the CPA Exam.



*Choosing the right review course is the most critical decision you will make once you decide to become a CPA.*

Passing the CPA Exam takes dedication, discipline, and a significant time investment. Choosing the right review course is the most critical decision you will make once you decide to become a CPA. If you pick the right course and use your time effectively and efficiently, you will have a strong likelihood of passing each section the first time. If you pick the wrong course, studying will be unnecessarily challenging and frustrating, and there is a strong likelihood you won't pass the exam the first time you take it. You will not only have to invest additional time re-studying the material, but you may also have to wait several weeks for your shot at redemption. Suddenly, the 125 study hours you invested grows to 250 study hours, and you still don't have the passing score you desire. Invest plenty of time researching each provider so the course you choose is the right one for you.

# YOUR LEARNING STYLE

*Everybody learns differently. We all have preferred methods that help us process information more efficiently. In order to study effectively for the CPA Exam, you must determine your learning style.*



You should evaluate what type of learner you are so you can get the course that will accommodate your learning style. Examine your study habits using the questions below.

## STUDY HABITS

## LEARNING STYLE

*Do I recall new information best when I learn it by myself?*

**Solitary Learner**

*Do I need other people to join me in the learning process?*

**Social Learner**

*Do I catch on faster when someone explains a concept to me?*

**Auditory Learner**

*Do I move a lot when I'm trying to concentrate?*

**Kinesthetic Learner**

*Do I learn best by reading a book or taking notes?*

**Linguistic Learner**

*Do I need to watch a video to help solidify a concept in my mind?*

**Visual Learner**

*Do I need to see the reasoning behind an idea to understand it?*

**Logical Learner**

*Do I use different approaches depending on the information I'm learning?*

**Multiple Learning Styles**

Below are **three** ways varying learning styles can affect a candidate's review course choice.



### **VISUAL LEARNER**

Visual learners need a review course with plenty to read and watch. Some review courses include books with examples and visual elements as well as informative video lectures. To review more efficiently, start by reading the books and then switch to the video lectures if you have trouble grasping the content.



### **AUDITORY LEARNER**

Auditory learners should seek out a review provider offering audio lectures. Audio reviews generally take longer to get through than books, but you can maximize your time by listening to them while you travel, clean, exercise, etc. You'll also benefit from access to video lectures or live courses.



### **KINESTHETIC LEARNER**

Kinesthetic learners benefit from flipping through flashcards, so consider courses containing flashcards if you don't want to make your own. Video lectures with expressive instructors using gestures to stress their points can be helpful for some. Physical copies of books are preferable to online-only PDFs or ebooks for most tactile learners, so be sure to seek them out.

Once you know your learning style, evaluate each review course to ensure it will meet your needs. A great way to determine whether a course will work for you is to try a demo, if available. Most review providers offer a free demo. Wherever you are in your buying decision, you're encouraged to utilize free demos to learn how a course looks, operates, and addresses your learning style before you make a monetary commitment.



# COURSE COMPONENTS

*Once you have an idea of how much time you want to devote to studying and what kinds of resources suit your learning style, it's time to discover what's available. There are many CPA review courses on the market and each offers a wide range of features.*



Decide which resources are most important to you, and seek out a course package that **meets your needs**. The following pages describe the most common components included in review courses:



# 01

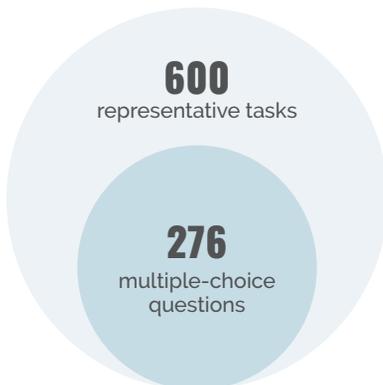
## TEXTBOOKS AND EBOOKS

The majority of CPA review providers print and sell physical books. Digital books can be great if you have to consolidate your review materials for the sake of travel, but they usually don't allow you to underline or highlight important sections, circle key terms, write notes in the margins, or quickly flip through the sections. You also might have trouble seeing tables, charts, and examples on smaller devices. Decide which medium suits you best, and find a provider or package that includes it. Remember, not all books are created equal. Some are exhaustive in length and others break content down into tiered outlines.

# 02

## TEST BANKS

Test banks are the databases of practice questions each CPA review course maintains. The questions in a test bank are usually either old exam questions released by the AICPA or questions written by the review provider. To pass the CPA Exam, you will need a lot in the bank. . . the test bank, that is!



There are a total of 276 multiple-choice questions in the four exam sections. According to the CPA Blueprints, there are over 100 testable topics that are further broken down into about 600 "representative tasks."

With so much content covered on the exam, you'll need a lot of practice CPA test questions to cover all your bases. Most courses offer between 5,000 and 7,500 MCQs. Some providers offer over 10,000 MCQs.

The smaller the test bank, the greater the risk of encountering the same question multiple times during your practice quizzes, which makes it more likely that you will memorize the correct answer rather than learn the concepts behind the question. No review provider has access to the questions on the current version of the CPA Exam, so **memorizing answers to specific questions will not help you on test day**. The size of the test bank should factor heavily into your CPA review course considerations. The more questions you have, the more opportunities you have to engage with concepts.



## 03 SIMULATIONS

The CPA Exam wants to make sure you're ready for the real-world responsibilities of a CPA, so it features questions simulating the tasks a first- or second-year CPA would perform. The AICPA's formal name for these is Task-Based Simulations, or TBSs. TBSs enable candidates to demonstrate their ability in applying technical accounting knowledge to practical situations with refined skill and appropriate judgment.

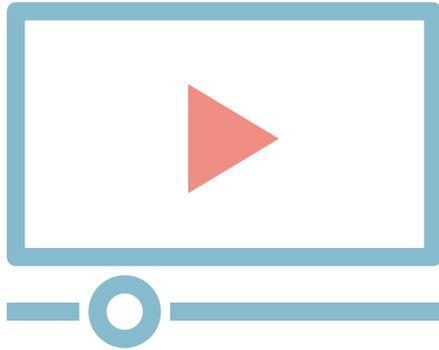
*The quality of a CPA review course's TBSs is critical to your exam preparations.*

Some CPA review providers have crafted TBSs that reflect those on the actual CPA Exam better than others.

Just as with test banks, you should consider the quantity of TBSs available in a review course. The number of simulations from even the most well-known review providers varies greatly. Some review courses contain fewer than 200 simulations, while many present 400-600. There are a few that offer over 1,000 simulations in their courses. Due to their difficulty and the many different types you may encounter, when it comes to Task-Based Simulations, the more practice you can get, the better. The number and quality of simulations in a course is critical to your success on the exam.

# 04 VIDEOS

Video lectures can be very useful for visual learners, but CPA candidates of any learning style can benefit from them:



- *When you want to study without reading the book.*  
If you're ready for some variety in your CPA Exam review, video lectures will help you mix things up so you can stay engaged and avoid burnout.
- *When you're really struggling with a concept.*  
If reading the outlines and answering practice questions doesn't clear up the foggy surrounding a particular topic, you may find the clarity you're looking for in videos. By offering a fresh perspective, video lectures help you increase your comprehension and strengthen your weak areas.

Most of the popular CPA review courses include video lectures, and the total number of video lecture hours between these courses is comparable (usually 100+). Make use of the course demo, if available. Finding video lectures that are professional and captivating is key. If you don't like the instructor, you won't get as much out of the lecture, so make sure to check out the demo beforehand.





# 05

## AUDIOS

Audio lectures are perfect for anyone who needs to maximize their time. The point of audio lectures is to listen to them when you would not otherwise be able to study (e.g., while you commute to work, drive, exercise, clean the house, etc.).

Audio lectures often only cover the most important exam concepts. Judge them based on their content coverage and teaching style.



### ***Content Coverage***

If you're an auditory learner who will listen to audio lectures frequently throughout your studies, you should invest in lectures that address everything you need to know to pass. Other candidates only using them to supplement their study might prefer a brief overview of each topic.



### ***Teaching Style***

Just as important as the content, the quality of the recording will affect how well you're able to focus. Energetic and engaging professors make audio lectures enjoyable. Some professors, despite being subject-matter experts, don't sufficiently captivate their audience. To make the most of your time, look for audio lectures from someone who is passionate about their field and able to instill that passion in you (or at least not put you to sleep).

Audio lectures can be either bundled into one complete course or sold separately. It can be a good idea to pick a review course that bundles the audio lectures with other review resources so you aren't forced to spend extra money if you decide you want to try them later.

# 06 FLASHCARDS

Flashcards are great for memorizing definitions and formulas, but there are pros and cons to using them.



## Pros

- + Practice recall of basic terms, definitions, and equations
- + Identify and focus on weak areas
- + Build confidence via repetition
- + Convenient, simple, and portable

## Cons

- Prioritize memorization over problem solving and analysis
- Present limited, oversimplified explanations
- Time-consuming to make on your own

Several review providers have done the work of making flashcards for you, and some providers offer digital flashcards in the form of an app or online tool. Flashcards are available as a standalone purchase from many providers if your chosen course does not include them.



# 07

## STUDY PLANNER

Not every CPA review course includes a study planner. Some courses may only provide a simple checklist of every topic their books address and leave you to decide how well you know the content and how quickly you need to progress.

When reviewing the information each review provider shares about its study planner, remember that a quality interactive study planner is:



### *Straightforward*

The planner should clearly lay out each step, and entering your schedule should be fast and simple.



### *Customizable*

It should let you input your study start date, exam date (whether it's tentative or official), holidays and personal days, and the amount of time you have to study each day. The study planner should then generate your own personalized study agenda incorporating your days off.



### *Self-adjusting*

Your study planner should adjust your schedule as your circumstances change and offer you helpful reminders if you start falling behind.

An interactive study planner will make allocating your time much easier, so seek out a CPA review course that includes one. Even the most organized people need a helpful reminder from time to time.

## 08

## MOBILE APP

Several CPA review providers offer mobile apps. Some have simply digitized their flashcards to fit the application format, while others have turned portions of their test banks into a quiz app. A few have also developed some or all of their CPA review courses in such a way that you can access different course components from any of your devices (e.g., desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.).



Mobile apps can be advantageous when you're motivated to study for the CPA Exam on the go, but because you'll be using them on your phone or tablet, you are vulnerable to being distracted by all the other entertaining things available through these devices. Your studies could be interrupted by notifications and incoming calls and texts unless you disable these while you study.

## 09

## LIVE REVIEW COURSES

The best time to take the CPA Exam is immediately after graduation because the information from your classes is still fresh in your mind and you can continue to exercise the good study habits you developed throughout your educational career.

*If it has been a while since you attended class, or if the student-teacher format is something you really enjoy, it can be worthwhile to find a live review course.*

There are two types of live lectures: (1) online lectures you can access from any location, on any device, and (2) those given in a classroom to which you must travel. Whether you choose the online or in-person format, taking a live review course is a lot like taking a college course—you show up at a designated time, attend with other CPA candidates, and receive instruction from a professor.

While most students are familiar with the advantages of live instruction, there are some **disadvantages** you should be aware of:

- 1** *Live review courses can be less efficient and flexible than self-study.*  
With live review courses, your progress depends on the class schedule. This timeline may move too fast or too slowly for you. Also, review providers usually only offer one CPA section at a time, so you must take the exam in the order in which the review providers offer the live courses. Furthermore, the set schedule doesn't account for possible life interruptions. If your lifestyle is adjustable enough to accommodate every session, you're in luck—but if something comes up, you'll miss out on that time to learn and lose the money you invested.
- 2** *Live review courses are often more costly than self-study materials.*  
To account for expenses, such as the classroom space and the professor's time, live review courses can be fairly costly. With some priced at over \$1,000 per part, purchasing a live course for all four exam sections entails spending almost three times more than for an online course—not to mention the additional cost of any supplemental study tools or travel expenses.
- 3** *Self-study materials reflect the exam environment better than a live review course.*  
A live review course can't reproduce the format and functionality of the exam. An exam-emulating online review course allows you to get to know the look and feel of the exam as you study for it.

Determine whether live courses are worth the investment and, if so, consider the review providers that offer them.





# 10 PRACTICE EXAMS

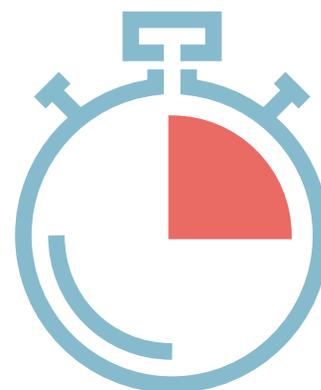
When you enter the Prometric testing center to take the CPA Exam, there is one thing you want to feel above all else: confidence. When you feel confident, you have a better chance of passing each CPA Exam section on your first try. One of the best ways to gain confidence is to familiarize yourself with the exam format and functionality beforehand. This is best achieved through practice exams.

Practice exams give you the chance to rehearse the entire CPA Exam, from beginning to end, before you actually take it. If you're going to make mistakes, it's best to get them out of the way in a low-stakes environment. To recreate the actual testing process, practice exams should simulate all aspects of the exam, including:

- *Moving through the introduction screens*
- *Entering the testlets*
- *Answering the questions*
- *Submitting the testlets*
- *Taking breaks*
- *Completing the concluding screens*

Practice exams should also feature an exam timer that counts down appropriately for each CPA Exam section (4 hours + 15 minute break) as well as directions, navigation, pop-ups, and tools that all appear and operate the same as they would on the CPA Exam.

When it comes to practice exams, the more closely they mimic the actual exam, the better. Ideally, your course should show you what each screen looks like (e.g., introductions, directions, Multiple-Choice Questions, Task-Based Simulations, etc.) and teach you how each screen functions (e.g., where to click to exit a testlet, how to open the Authoritative Literature, how to navigate to the next question, etc.) on the actual test.



### CPA TESTING TIME

4 hours + 15 minute break

*One of the best ways to gain confidence is to familiarize yourself with the exam format and functionality beforehand.*

While almost every major CPA review provider offers practice exams, the extent to which they replicate the look and feel of the CPA Exam varies. Many say they mimic the exam, but most do not accurately recreate the aesthetics or functionality of the exam everywhere. However, a handful have designed and programmed their courses to recreate the exam environment, and in doing so, are able to help you gain confidence and feel completely comfortable navigating the CPA Exam before you sit.

You can see for yourself how well a course mimics the exam by accessing their free demo and then visiting the AICPA's website to review the free exam tutorial and sample tests.

# PROVIDER FEATURES

*Because most CPA review providers include the same types of study materials in their courses, some take steps to distinguish themselves by enhancing these materials with additional features.*



These features can make the difference in determining whether or not you pass the first time. Therefore, you must also consider these features when deciding which course is best for you.



## ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Adaptive technology is a ground-breaking development that the CPA review industry has embraced in recent years. Adaptive technology bases review on the individual's learning requirements by detecting what they need and then delivering the appropriate content.

Adaptive technology is a bit of a buzzword among CPA review providers. Many providers place this phrase in descriptions of their courses and draw attention to it, but not every course lives up to the claim. Truly adaptive CPA review targets your weak areas, keeps you on track, and ensures your mastery of each topic.



### TARGETS YOUR WEAK AREAS

An adaptive review course should be designed to accommodate your unique strengths and weaknesses. Good adaptive technology assesses your knowledge base using short, targeted diagnostic quizzes to create a benchmark and customizes your study plan to pinpoint your weak areas. Adaptive technology also delivers on-demand performance analytics for each quiz and question type so you can stay on top of your progress.

### KEEPS YOU ON TRACK

If you're stuck on a certain topic, adaptive technology will consider how much time you've spent on the volume of MCQs and TBSs you've answered and suggest moving on. Later, it will remind you to go back and attempt them again. This allows you to study more efficiently and avoid facing mental roadblocks during your review.

### ENSURES YOUR MASTERY OF EACH TOPIC

To get you to CPA Exam level readiness, adaptive technology quizzes you on recent topics as well as troublesome ones from previous study units. By continuously providing questions to address your weaknesses, an adaptive CPA review course empowers you to learn from your mistakes and keeps older topics fresh in your mind.

The problem with the adaptive technology of some CPA review courses is that it's "one-size-fits-all," not built from scratch to meet the specific needs of CPA candidates. Some courses claiming to be adaptive are basically just test banks that keep assigning you questions without pointing you to where you really need to focus. A course powered by proprietary adaptive technology is more likely to prepare you effectively because it actually adjusts to your performance and suggests steps for strengthening your weak areas. Adaptive CPA review lets you study smarter, not harder, so seek out the CPA course that features authentic adaptive technology.



## EXTENDED AND UNLIMITED GUARANTEES

The AICPA only allows candidates 18 months to pass all four exam sections. If you don't pass all sections within that 18-month window, you'll lose credit for any sections you've already passed and have to take them again. Considering the limited time you have to pass, you'll want a CPA review program that contains a course access guarantee.

Several review providers offer 18-month access to their courses. But what if something comes up? What if your life takes a major turn, but you still plan to earn the CPA? If you lose credit for a passed section and have to extend your exam journey beyond 18 months, should you lose access to your CPA review course as well?

What if you want to get your materials early while there's a good deal but you're not quite ready to start studying yet?

To account for these and other situations, some review providers grant longer access. Some offer extensions for another few months, but they often charge for it. Others include longer or unlimited access guarantees with their more expensive product offerings. Paying a little more for a premium course can be well worth it in order to protect your study materials.



## OFFLINE ACCESS

It is rare to find a CPA review provider that allows offline access to their **entire** course, but several provide individual review materials that you can use without the Internet. Some providers allow their video lectures to be viewed offline. Audio lectures are often available for download. Other CPA review providers offer mobile apps, which usually contain practice questions, video lectures, flashcards, or all of the above.

The most common and simple way to study without the Internet is to use physical books, which many review courses include.

If you're often traveling or don't anticipate having reliable access to the Internet, you should prioritize a course that offers plenty of offline resources.





## FREE CONTENT UPDATES

Regulatory bodies, such as the IRS and FASB, often add, remove, and revise authoritative guidance throughout the year. You want a review course that tracks when these changes become testable and issues free course updates to account for any exam changes that occur while you're studying.



## EXAM EMULATION

When you finally sit for the CPA Exam, it should feel like you're just taking another practice quiz from the comfort of your own home. Your review course should be programmed to replicate the Prometric testing environment so that every quiz and simulation you complete looks exactly like what you'll see on the real CPA Exam. That way, you won't waste any time figuring out how to navigate the exam, and you can concentrate solely on answering the questions and performing your best.



## GROUP STUDY

Only a few CPA review courses offer access to online communities or student forums. If you're looking for motivational support or an outlet to vent your exam frustrations, you can always connect with other candidates by joining private social media groups or following exam-related hashtags, but you'll have to initiate those endeavors yourself.



## ACCESS TO ACCOUNTING EXPERTS

Almost every CPA review course includes assistance from professional accountants, professors, or other experts who've mastered the more advanced principles of accounting.

For some CPA review courses, this takes the form of a community forum that is monitored by staff, "subject-matter experts," or "expert CPAs." Occasionally, these forums let candidates review student-submitted questions that CPAs or accounting professors have answered, and they usually let candidates request direct guidance as well. In other CPA courses, you can submit questions to accounting experts directly through the course. A few providers even allow you to contact the professors or instructors directly via phone or email. Finally, a few CPA review providers let you discuss exam schedules and receive study and testing tips from their accounting experts as well.

# CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COACHING

*A good review course will thoroughly cover the exam content. A great review course will also offer resources that fit your learning style. But the best review courses will also support you as you study.*



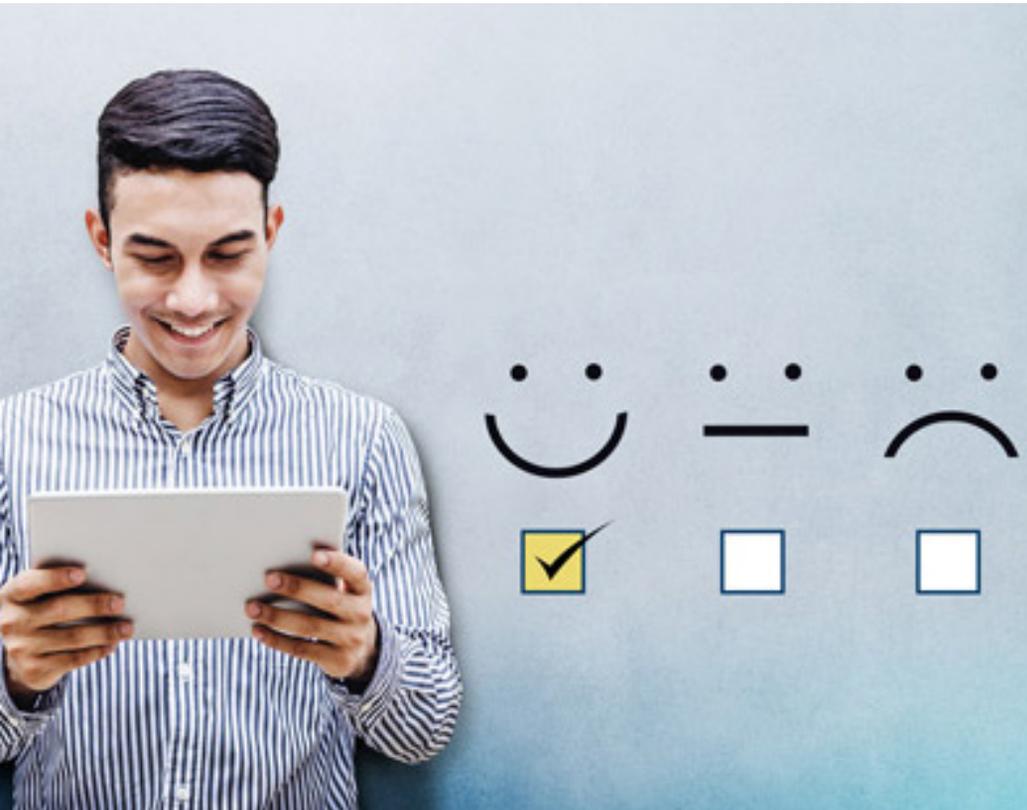
**WORKING WITH A COMPANY POSSESSING STRONG CUSTOMER SERVICE VALUES IS CRUCIAL TO MAKING YOUR CPA EXAM PROCESS AS SMOOTH AND PLEASANT AS POSSIBLE.**

Access to phenomenal customer service can't be oversold. Many CPA review providers deliver customer service via phone or email. Some also make themselves available through live chat and social media messaging. A select few even outfit their courses with 7-days-a-week assistance from a technical support team. Working with a company possessing strong customer service values is crucial to making your CPA Exam process as smooth and pleasant as possible, so you should research the customer service quality of the providers you are considering.

For a handful of CPA review providers, going the extra mile also involves dedicated coaching from exam mentors who will continuously offer assistance and advice until you pass. They can help you formulate your study plan, provide you with personalized study tips, answer any administrative questions you have, and provide you with constant encouragement.

Mentoring can make a world of difference in the speed and success of your CPA Exam studies, so rank review providers offering extraordinary customer service and personalized coaching above those that don't.

# REVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS



**Reviews** are feedback that customers leave on search engines and social media sites, like Google and Facebook. These sites treat all reviews equally and let you look at every single one.



**Testimonials** are the quotes and snippets you read on the actual site of a review provider. The testimonials on a review provider's site are almost always positive and have been handpicked for public display.

Reading both reviews and testimonials is essential for gauging the quality of a review course. If something looks too good to be true, read the reviews on the company's social media sites so you can get a more balanced perspective.

But don't disregard testimonials. Testimonials highlight what the review provider does well and whether providers are actually listening to their candidates by creating truly useful resources. And, if you read testimonials from individuals in similar life circumstances as you who used particular study materials to achieve exam success, you can get a sense of the study materials you need to pass the CPA Exam as well. Use the words of those who have gone before you not only to direct your review search, but also inform your CPA review strategy.

# INDUSTRY LONGEVITY

*The AICPA first offered the exam to state boards of accountancy in 1917. The first self-study CPA review courses were published in the 1970s. The exam prep industry is roughly 60 years younger than the exam itself, but it has still existed for almost half a century.*



There are a handful of CPA review providers that have been around since the beginning. They pioneered the first review books, and they're still providing quality review course materials.

While age is not an advantage in every industry, it is in the CPA review market. The fact that some providers have endured countless CPA Exam changes and adjusted to dozens of new exam versions gives them significant insight into the industry. If you hear a CPA review course boast about being in business for 40+ years, you can rest assured they've been around the block enough to know what you need to pass the CPA Exam.

# VALUE

*CPA review is an investment in your future. Preparing for and taking the exam requires a sacrifice of time and money, but the benefits a CPA certification will bring to your career clearly outweigh the costs.*

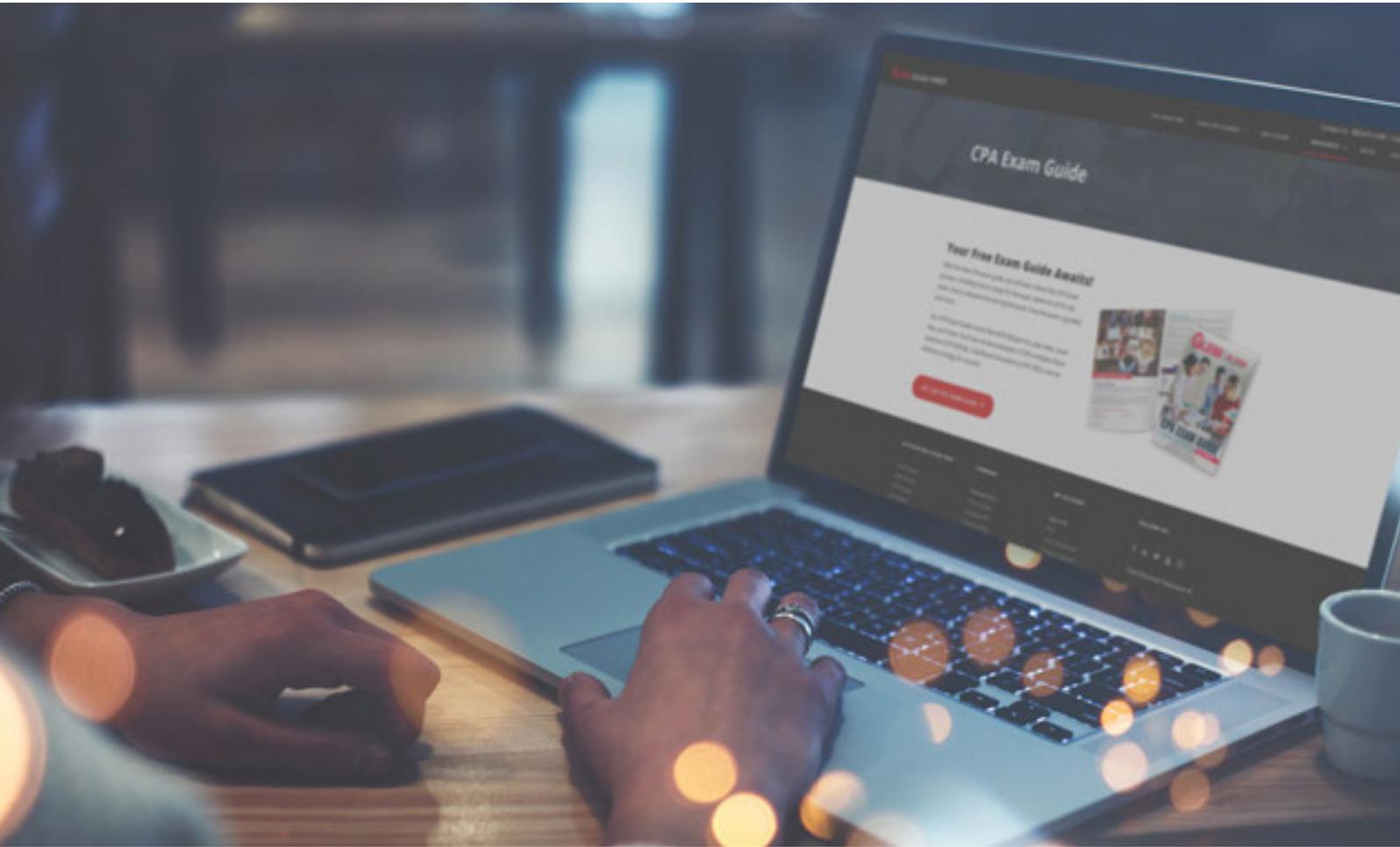


When you explore the CPA review market, you'll see something surprising. Some CPA review courses cost about twice as much as others, and the cheapest ones aren't all that cheap to begin with. How can there be such wide range in price?

While it's fair for review providers to charge more for courses containing additional review tools and features, it's not always necessary to charge as much as they do. Some courses have a well-earned reputation they use to justify their high prices. Other providers advertise high prices on their websites but then offer deep discounts year-round to convince candidates they're saving a lot of money. Sometimes a rock bottom price does indicate a lower quality product, but other times, review providers confident in their materials may price themselves low to reach a greater number of candidates.

The key is to decide which components and features you need and how much you're willing to pay for them. Costs will compound if you have to retake any exam sections, but there is a point where your money will yield diminishing returns. Where that is varies from person to person, but you now have the tools to decide for yourself whether a CPA review course is right for you.

# LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE CPA EXAM



You're now adequately equipped to scan the landscape of CPA review providers and set yourself up for success. For a side-by-side comparison of the most popular review courses currently on the market, check out [this review provider comparison](#), and see for yourself how the available courses stack up.

If you still have questions, you can learn everything you need to know about the CPA Exam from [this free CPA Exam Guide](#). Use it to start your journey toward CPA Exam success.