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**Taking the CPA
Exam?
Here's Help.**

ThisWayToCPA.com

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Taking the CPA Exam? Here's Help.

Visit the AICPA's CPA Exam homepage and ThisWayToCPA.com for the info you need to take the exam and become a CPA.

Chris Parsons knows a thing or two about taking the CPA Exam. Parsons not only passed the exam, but he also won a 2016 Elijah Watt Sells Award for his performance on it. (For context: Only 58 out of the more than 100,000 people who took the exam in 2016 won the Sells award.) Parsons is now pursuing CPA licensure as a valuation associate at PwC in New York City.

One key to his success, Parsons said, was eliminating surprises. He researched the subject matter he needed to know for each section, learned about the exam format, and made sure he understood state licensure requirements so he'd know what to expect as he prepared for the exam and sought his license.

If you're thinking of taking the CPA Exam, you too can get the knowledge you need to go into the test feeling confident and prepared. The AICPA features a wealth of resources both on its exam homepage (aicpa.org/cpaexam) and on ThisWayToCPA (thiswaytocpa.com), a website dedicated solely to becoming a CPA.

Here are some tips and tools to help you plan for and pass the CPA Exam:

Know what's on the exam.

The AICPA provides the Uniform CPA Examination Blueprints (right), a guide that tells you what's on the exam, on its exam homepage, said Mike Horan, senior manager, communications, for the AICPA Examinations team. (Find the



TOP 5 REASONS TO PURSUE THE CPA



Earning
potential



Career
opportunities



Stability



Flexibility

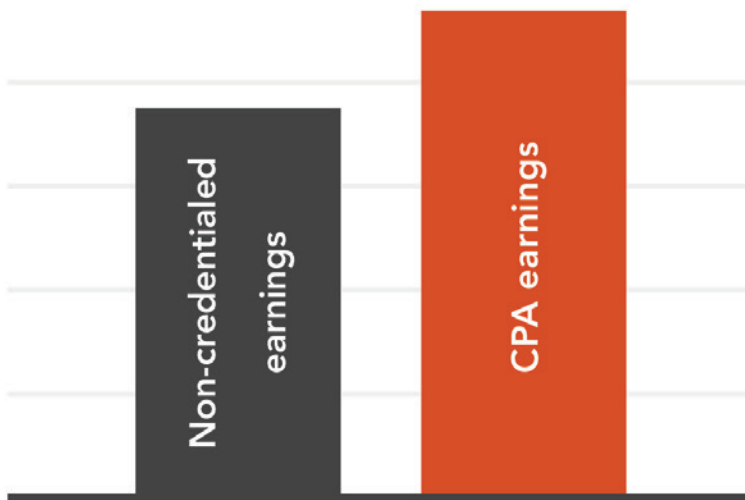


Prestige
and respect

**11%
INCREASE**

in demand
for accounting
and finance
professionals
is projected
through 2024.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,
December 2015



CPAs earn an average of **10–15% more** than their counterparts in the accounting field.

Source: Robert Half 2017 Salary Guide

links to the blueprints and all the resources mentioned in this article in the accompanying “CPA Exam Resources” box.)

“It gives a nice introduction to the exam as a whole, and then drills down by section,” he said. “You actually get to see, topic by topic, what you may face in each of those exam sections. There’s a variety of resources out there, but this should be your first stop so you can find out what’s on the exam.”

The blueprints also provide an in-depth look at what skill level you’ll need for each topic on the exam—whether you’ll just be asked to remember and understand a concept or whether you’ll need to apply that knowledge to a problem.

Understand state licensure requirements.

Different states have different requirements for sitting for the CPA Exam and obtaining your license. ThisWayToCPA’s State & Territory Requirements feature provides the information you need to determine what your state board requires.

At a glance, you can see if your state has a citizenship or residency requirement, requires a Social Security number, or participates in international programs. Then you can drill down by clicking on a state to see details such as the minimum age requirement, hours of education requirement, and any special notes about that particular state. Here, too, you’ll find an address, phone number, and links to

that state’s board of accountancy and state CPA society.

Practice.

Want to take a guided tour of the CPA Exam? Or take a sample test to get a feel for the exam experience? The AICPA offers both on its exam homepage.

The tutorial is like taking a walk through the exam. You’ll see the types of questions and how they’re asked. Though it does not contain any actual exam content, it will make you more comfortable with the technology—“what buttons you’ll need to use, how to maneuver around—all so you don’t go into the test cold,” Horan said.

The sample tests are a great way to familiarize yourself with the exam’s func-

tionality. You'll answer test questions that represent each type of question found on the exam: multiple choice (MCQ), written communication (WC), and task-based simulation (TBS).

Turn to your firm.

If you've already got a job lined up, or you've done an internship with a firm you're considering going to work for, it's worth finding out if the firm will support you through the exam process.

Jason Hardy, CPA, manager—assurance services at Grossman Yanak & Ford LLP in Pittsburgh, said his firm promotes a pro-CPA culture, and works to help new hires achieve their CPA goals. The firm pays for and provides exam preparation materials for its employees at no cost to them, he said. In addition, the firm reimburses up to \$1,500 in exam fees.

The firm also uses a mentoring approach, where new hires are set up with a coach who is one to two levels above them. Part of each coach's role is to check in with any new hires who have decided to take the CPA Exam to see how they're doing, if there are areas where they're struggling, and if there's advice the coach can offer, Hardy said.

Cheryl Exline, CPA, CGMA, tax manager at Arnett Carbis Toothman's Charleston, W.V., office, said her firm also promotes a pro-CPA culture by discuss-

ing the importance of the CPA with all college students and graduates with whom they come in contact.

In addition to financial assistance with exam fees and review courses for its employees pursuing their CPA, Arnett Carbis Toothman has at times held study groups for employees. Exline said it can sometimes be difficult to coordinate schedules for study groups, however, so the firm does permit employees to study in the office if their work schedule allows.

"The firm also gives an incentive bonus to pass the exam as early as possible," she said. "The bonus decreases the longer it takes the employee to pass the exam."

Learn from others.

The best person to tell you how to plan for the exam and what to expect is someone who's already been through it. In ThisWayToCPA's CPA Exam Diaries, CPAs who have passed the exam talk about their experience and offer practical advice. The "diaries" present each person's strategy for taking the exam, how they studied, and a wealth of other information.

"You'll find that studying for the exam is not a one-size-fits-all process, and the CPAs that share their stories in the Exam Diaries represent multiple approaches you can take," said Rebecca Blough, senior manager, academic and

student engagement at the AICPA.

Consider networking with others who are in the process of taking the exam or have already taken it. A number of resources are available for this purpose:

- The CPA Exam Candidate group on LinkedIn is active as a forum for exam candidates to share information and ask questions about the exam.
- Join the AICPA as a student affiliate or exam candidate affiliate member and you'll receive regular updates on exam resources and information.
- Register at ThisWayToCPA.com and you'll receive the monthly Need-to-Know News newsletter.

Stay up-to-date on the latest news.

Want to know what the first quarter's CPA Exam pass rates are as soon as they're published? Or see the 2017 CPA Exam booklet, which contains an overview of testing requirements and details, as well as resources to help you prepare? The AICPA maintains an announcements section on its exam homepage to keep you updated on the latest happenings.

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Article by Lea Hart, freelance writer for the AICPA

CPA EXAM RESOURCES

CPA Exam homepage:

aicpa.org/cpaexam

2017 exam booklet:

tinyurl.com/yca87evd

Blueprints:

tinyurl.com/yasb3che

Tutorial and sample tests:

tinyurl.com/yasndc36

News and announcements:

tinyurl.com/h3z9day

Join the AICPA as a Student Affiliate Member (free):

thiswaytocpa.com/join-aicpa

Join the AICPA as a CPA Exam Candidate Affiliate:

tinyurl.com/y7wb2d4q

LinkedIn group for CPA exam candidates:

linkedin.com/groups/160781

ThisWayToCPA:

thiswaytocpa.com

CPA Exam and Licensure Center:

thiswaytocpa.com/exam-licensure

CPA Exam Diaries:

tinyurl.com/y75gky68

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Pinterest: pinterest.com/thiswaytocpa

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/groups/4544044

The CPA profession comes with LOTS OF PERKS. Now the journey to get there does too.



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joining the AICPA should be in your present.

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for Certified Public Accountants—and as a student
you can join for free.

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- ✓ *Valuable industry news & publications*
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- ✓ *Members-only deals on products & services*
- ✓ *Bargains on essential accounting resources*



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