

Top 10 CPA Exam Study Tips from Successful Candidates

Whether you're just starting out or already knee-deep in the CPA Exam process, remember you don't have to tackle this alone! We rounded up tips from those who have been there and want to share their lessons learned with you (spoiler: consistency and resilience are key).

- 1) Identify your goals and set a time frame for when you want to complete the exams. They take an immense amount of discipline, and knowing the goals for why you want the CPA license will help you continue on your path to passing the exams. — *Ryan McMonagle, CPA, DOZ (Dauby O'Connor & Zaleski, LLC)*
- 2) Take your exams before starting work full time! Don't underestimate the time commitment. — *Yaugen Karakin, EY*
Stay committed and set aside enough time for studying—treat Exam prep as a full-time job.— *Nick Grote, BKD, LLP*
- 3) You know yourself better than any CPA Exam prep software, so study how you learn best. For example, if you learn best from listening to lectures, spend the time doing the lectures and less time reading the book. Also: do not stress about how you are performing on practice questions. The goal is to learn *why* you are missing the question, so take the time to review all the questions and understand why the correct answer is what it is. This goes for questions you get right as well as questions you get wrong. — *Luke Fleck, Dauby O'Connor & Zaleski, LLC*
- 4) I would briefly scan the section/chapter but mostly focus on multiple choice questions and then simulations. If there were an area I was consistently missing multiple choices or simulations on, I would read that section in detail and work through some examples. Then I would go back to multiple choices and simulations. Taking a practice exam a day or two before was essential for me. Have a good grasp on how long each section should take so you don't run out of time. Pace yourself well—if you know the question, answer and move on. If you don't know, guess and move on. Spend your time and mental energy on questions you believe you can figure out.— *Russell Pitts, MSA, CMA, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP*
- 5) Resist the temptation to passively watch review videos or lectures—active practice and problem sets will serve you far better.— *Tyler Hardcastle, CPA, JD, Ice Miller LLP*
- 6) Take notes while listening to the lectures. It really helps the material stick.— *Kelsey Mayer, CPA, Riney Hancock CPAs*
- 7) Stay consistent with your studying and make sure to put at least 30 minutes in every day to stay in a study grind mindset.— *Yakov Adelfinskiy, CPA, Petrow Kane Leemhuis PC*
- 8) Don't memorize answers to practice questions. Try to understand the *why* behind the correct answer.— *Adam Miller, CPA, Brotherhood Mutual*
- 9) Resiliency pays off. I passed three of my exams with (caring for) a baby, and I failed some until I passed. When I would fail one, I would immediately start studying that section again while the content was fresh in my mind and re-schedule the Exam. While I used Becker, sometimes it wasn't enough, so I also watched YouTube videos by Darius Clark, who would explain some of the concepts in language that was easier to understand.— *Soray Miller, CPA, PwC*
- 10) You need to sacrifice to pass this Exam. If you're not feeling the pain of saying "no" to other things for the sake of studying, you probably aren't putting in enough time. Look at it as an investment in your future for years to come. This isn't to say you can't do anything you enjoy — just be strategic. Keeping that balance is very important and will help you to operate to the best of your ability. I tried to find ways to integrate studying into the other parts of my life so it stayed exciting and stimulated my brain, helping to truly synthesize the information while still doing things I enjoyed. For instance, if I had to run an errand, I would bring my backpack and find a coffee shop to study in for a couple of hours afterwards. By exploring a new place, I was fulfilling the sense of adventure that often gets neglected while studying. I found I remembered concepts I'd learned in these unique new places because my brain associated the change in environment with the new information. Pretty cool how our brains work! I also would invite friends to sit in a coffee shop with me and work or read while I studied. This way, we both got work done but at least got to be together. I'd also listen to certain lectures while driving or when I'd otherwise listen to a podcast. There's no reason you can't keep it exciting! — *Juliana Romano, CPA, Kruggel Lawton CPAs*



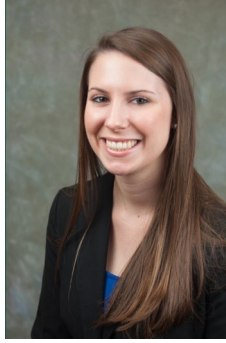
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Heather Cerda, CPA

Cerda has been an ARCPA member since 2018. As a previous participant in the ARCPA Leadership Academy, she looks forward to seeing the younger members being more involved in ARCPA activities.



Heather has been with HCJ CPAs & Advisors, PLLC for five years and is a Tax Manager. The best thing about her job are the people she works with. She is a native of Jonesboro, Arkansas, and a graduate of Arkansas Tech University, class of 2016.

Family and Background

Heather grew up on a farm. She considers her dad as one of her heroes. Before becoming a CPA, she worked for a large Fortune 500 company out of college before receiving her CPA license in 2018. Heather is married to her husband Rene. The couple has a two year old son Aden, a German Shepherd named Magnus and two cats Big Kitty and Luna.

Professional/Community Activities

Heather is the President of the Northeast Chapter of CPAs. She also serves on several ARCPA committees, such as Taxation, Federal Tax Institute, and Emerging CPAs. In addition, she is involved in her local church.

Favorite hobbies

She enjoys reading J.K. Rowling books, attending music festivals, and spending time outside. When she is not spending time at the river or off-roading ATVs or in a Jeep, you can find Heather listening to a true crime podcast, lie Astonishing Legends, Criminal, Ear Hustle or Crime Junkie. She says if she weren't a CPA she would be a private investigator or detective. People would be surprised that she is a big fan of heavy metal music. Her favorite app is Spotify.

Heather's pet peeve is micromanaging. According to the Clifton Strengths test, she is considered an achiever. Her bucket list includes travelling and her dream vacation would include a trip to Rome, Italy.

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Amber Moore, CPA

Moore is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for Pafford Emergency Medical Services. She is a native of McGehee, AR and an alumna of The University of Arkansas at Monticello. Amber enjoys spending time with her husband, traveling with her children for recreational sports, and spending time with friends and family.

When she is not working, she volunteers on the board of the Women's Service League of McGehee, on the budget and finance committee at First Baptist Church of McGehee, and on the board of the Delta Country Club. She and her husband have a 10 year old daughter and an 8 year old son. She coaches her daughter's softball team and teaches the preschool children on Wednesday nights at church.

What is your first involvement with ARCPA?

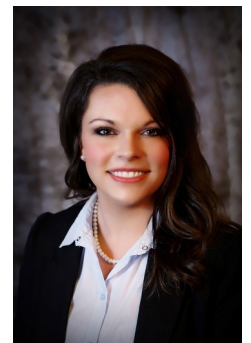
I began attending the Southeast Chapter Meetings of the ARCPA at the University of Arkansas at Monticello in 2009 when I declared a major in accounting. I've met several influential professionals in the industry at the Southeast Chapter Meetings and developed a network of contacts with this avenue.

Best advice for students on taking the CPA Exam?

My best advice to any student interested in becoming a CPA and taking the CPA exam is to go ahead and invest your time now to land this accomplishment before you start a family. I took the exam after college but failed. Then, I waited until my children were 3 & 4 years old before taking it again and it was much more difficult mentally and physically the second time. I passed on the first shot the second time, but I knew I had more to lose, and failure wasn't an option. You can do it! Invest in yourself! Go ahead and get it over with!

Why did you become a CPA?

Honestly, I wasn't sure what direction I wanted my career to go but I loved numbers, balancing, and calculating. When I took my first accounting class in college, I knew it was the career for me. I became a CPA to better myself and my career. I knew I would never have trouble finding a good job and being able to support my family. This proved true, especially during COVID, when CPAs remained in high demand.



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Student members may attend ARCPA conferences for just \$15! (we're not kidding!) Meet and network with professionals and prospective future employers at any of these ARCPA events for \$15 each:

- End of Busy Season CPE & Fish Fry
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 - Equip Conference
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 - Agriculture Conference
 - AR Federal Tax Institute
- Call ARCPA to register: (501) 664-8739 or (800) 482-8739.

Becker CPA Review

Arkansas Society of CPAs associate or student members can receive a discount on the Becker Professional CPA Review for the full 4-part review course. Save \$300 off of the full 4-part review of either Live, Online, or self study review course format. Becker CPA Review classes correspond with the exam testing windows that you select.

For more information on this member service, or to access ARCPA preferred pricing with Becker, ARCPA members should visit the partner page <https://www.becker.com/arcpaPP>.

Surgent CPA Review

Surgent CPA Review can help students prepare for the CPA Exam—during or after their undergraduate or graduate education. The 100% online course utilizes a state-of-the-art adaptive learning platform that shortens study time and improves retention allowing students to prepare and pass faster! Enrollment includes access to 350+ 20 minute-or-less video lectures, a test bank of over 7,700 multiple-choice questions, over 400 simulations, customized study guides, and unlimited practice exams.

ARCPA members receive a 35% discount on the Surgent CPA exam review course! These state-of-the-art online lectures provide a customized study program, access that doesn't expire, and a pass guarantee with every course. Studying with Surgent means less stress for you—and a faster path to passing the CPA Exam. Learn more: www.surgentcpareview.com/partners/arkansas-society-of-cpas/

Wiley CPA Review

As an ARCPA member, you are entitled to a 20% discount on all Wiley CPAexcel products, including the popular Wiley CPAexcel Platinum Course featuring Bite-sized Lessons and 12,000 AICPA CPA Exam practice questions.

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Arkansas Students Compete at BAP National Meeting

Students from UCA, UA-Fayetteville, and UA-Fort Smith traveled to Orlando, Florida in July for the Beta Alpha Psi annual meeting. Beta Alpha Psi is an honor organization for financial information students and professionals with over 300 chapters internationally. The organization promotes academic excellence, professional development, and responsible practices.

Before the meeting started, the students enjoyed an Arkansas BAP Connection breakfast sponsored by the Arkansas Society of CPAs. At the breakfast, students learned about benefits of ARCPA memberships. During the annual meeting, the students networked, provided community service, attended professional development meetings, and participated in multiple competitions.

UCA Recognition at the Annual Meeting

- ⇒ Beta Alpha Psi recognized UCA as a superior chapter.
- ⇒ Harris Felton, Tristen Porter, and Kaidan Zheng won 1st place in the Best Practices Competition (Art of Engagement Category) by presenting their Resume Escape Room project.
- ⇒ Daniel Wheeler competed in Project Run With It, a real-world consulting project.
- ⇒ Dean Michael Hargis received the Outstanding Dean Award.
- ⇒ Dr. Connie McKnight became a Chapter Advocate for the Southwest Region.

UA-Fayetteville Recognition at the Annual Meeting

- ⇒ Beta Alpha Psi recognized UA-Fayetteville as a superior chapter.
- ⇒ Emily Fentress, Regan Kennedy, and Luke Stanford won 1st place in the Best Practices Competition (Art of Change Category) by presenting information on their group tutoring program.
- ⇒ Joe Solon competed in Project Run With It, a real-world consulting project.
- ⇒ Dr. Tom Hayes received an Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award.

UA-Fort Smith

- ⇒ Beta Alpha Psi recognized UA-Fort Smith as a superior chapter.

Congratulations to these Beta Alpha Psi students and faculty advisors!



Back row:

Joe Solon, Austin Disper, Emily Fentress, Luke Stanford, Tristen Porter, Harris Felton, Kaidan Zheng, Daniel Wheeler

Front row: Regan Kennedy, Lea Sappington, Katie Weller, Sarah Rogers



BETA ALPHA PSI

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