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Then I would read through the text and make any notes on the important concepts I saw, and then make my own flashcards on top of that. I tried to memorize the entire textbook for every section! For most of us, this was no problem in college, because the tests were much MUCH less broad. The CPA exam is a beast of an exam, unlike anything you have ever done before, and requires study tactics unlike anything you have had to perform. The moment of clarity happened for me when I found out I had failed the 4th part of the CPA exam. I decided that this test was no joke, and if I was going to succeed I was going to have to drastically change my study method. How To Create A CPA Exam Study Plan That Works Step 1: Identify Your Primary Learning Resource As always, you need to determine your study personality before you start studying and using a CPA review course. To use myself as an example, I discovered that I am a self-studier. Meaning that I learn best by reading and teaching myself. So I decided that it would be in my best interest to cut out the video lectures and just focus on reading the text and answering questions and then only use video lectures as a reference if needed. As you know CPA Review Courses have two primary resources. Their lectures and the textbook. They both present the same information just differently. So it's best if you figure out which resources helps you learn the fastest and use that as your primary learning tool. That being said, if for any reason you come across a topic that is too complex to teach yourself, or you find yourself spinning your wheels, then you NEED to go to the video lectures or the text and see if their explanation helps you. If that still doesn't work then it is time to contact customer service or visit the forums for help. Just remember that the CPA exam is so broad that it is not the most effective way of studying. If you end up spending several hours on one topic, so pick your battles wisely. RESULT: Saved me 15-20 hours per section (70 hours total from my review course) Step 2: Cut Out Study Activities That Are Busy Work Remember that as you study for the CPA exam that your MOST valuable resource is time. You don't have time like you did in college to take notes over everything. You also can't expect to be able to just cram before your exams and re-learn everything in the earlier chapters. You have to be smarter. For example, instead of making my own flashcards, I just invested in pre-made cards. Then IF I ran across something that I didn't want to forget I would make a quick flashcard for it. I focused on just-in-time learning instead of shotgun learning where I made flashcards for anything and everything. RESULTS: Saved me around 1 hour per week for each section X 24 weeks (based on studying for 6 weeks per section) = approximately 25 hours Step 3: Avoid Spinning Your Wheels At All Costs Spend no more than 3-5 minutes on a multiple choice question. Use the analytics provided by your review course to measure how long on average you are spending on each multiple choice question and if it is longer than 5 minutes you need to find ways to speed up your test taking. The goal being that you need to prepare yourself for the real CPA exam. The CPA exam is so incredibly broad that if you spend 15 minutes on one multiple choice question it just isn't efficient in the broad scheme of things. Just keep moving and flag the question and save it for later so you can address it if you have time later on. Spinning your wheels also makes you indecisive which can be very dangerous as well. The worst part of the CPA exam multiple choice questions are that there always seems to be 2 right answers. It is up to you to determine which one is most correct, because unfortunately there is no partial credit! I always found that going with my gut was always better than just sitting there for an extra 2-3 minutes second guessing myself. Dont let this be you. If you find yourself spinning your wheels, write the question down and save it for later. If you still don't get it then outsource it to your CPA review courses support or hire a CPA exam tutor to help! RESULT: Before I changed my study tactics, I typically answered 1,200 practice questions for each section at an average of 4.5 minutes per question. By making a concerted effort, I successfully shaved 30 seconds off the average time of each question which equates to 40 total hours saved (or 10 hours per section). This allowed me to spend that time researching why I got certain questions wrong and strengthening my knowledge of that section. Total Time Saved Breakdown Skipped Lectures and highlighting: Saved 70 hours Skipped making my own flashcards and outlines: Saved 25 hours Cut AVG time spent per question by 30 seconds: Saved 40 hours Total time saved: 135 hours! Key Takeaway Once I implemented these changes to my study schedule, my scores jumped 5-15 points per section! It is not because I was studying less, but because I was studying the way that works best for me. By cutting out all of the excess fat in my study schedule, I was studying more efficiently and the rate of my learning and retention skyrocketed! Please understand that these tips worked for me, but they may not work for everyone. You know yourself better than anyone else, so please do yourself a favor and step back for a minute and look at how you are studying. Do you see any inefficiencies or ineffective study activities that you are performing? If so cut them out immediately and spend that time doing more productive studying that is actually going to help you learn the material. The review courses today try to cater to as many different types of people as possible, but you are unique. Nobody be afraid to do think outside the box like I did. The results can be amazing! If you are afraid you are using the wrong CPA review course or just not happy with it, then you can always use my CPA Review Course Comparison Tool here to see if the way you learn best matches with your current review course. If not and you are struggling to pass just like I did, then it might be time to make a change. 9. Constantly Be Reviewing Everything You Have Learned From Your CPA Review Course The #1 mistake I made while studying for the CPA exam is studying in a linear fashion. Go through chapter 1, check Move onto chapter 2, check Continue onto chapter 3, check! Repeat until final chapter AND break out! Forget everything I learned in early chapters and have to scramble to re-learn right before exam Fall Even with today's advanced "adaptive" or "smart" learning technology that is being heavily marketed by all the major CPA review courses is not enough to save you from this linear study plan. What's the solution? A. B. R. - Always Be Reviewing Set aside just 15-30 minutes every other day to review will make a huge difference in how well you remember the material on exam day. This is a process I like to call "CPA Exam Study Looping." How To Implement CPA Exam Study Loops Watch your CPA Course video lectures/read text for Chapter 1 Move onto chapter 2 and complete your learning activities Set aside 15-45 minutes loop back and review chapters 1 & 2 Move onto chapter 3 and complete learning activities Loop back and review everything you have learned so far from chapters 1-3 Repeat until you complete all chapters within 10 - 14 days of your exam date Need Help Implementing CPA Exam Study Loops With Your CPA Review Course? How you implement study loops is going to depend on your CPA review course, your schedule and many other variables. I put together brief tutorials for UWorld Roger CPA and Wiley CPAexcel here for your reference. I teach this process in great detail in my mentorship program Ultimate CPA Exam Guide and have a complete CPA Exam Support System for you to help you stay on track. You can absolutely try to implement this all on your own using the steps above or I can speed up your learning curve by teaching you step-by-step how to do all of this to help you avoid any confusion and trial and error. For more info on how to implement these strategies, check out [www.cpaexammentor.com](#) 10. Use CPA Exam Flashcards Every Day Out of all of these CPA exam tips, I would not be a CPA today if it wasn't for the flashcards that I used to study and memorize definitions. I made the early mistake of trying to make my own flashcards which turned into busy work. I found that the pre-made flashcards offered by various CPA review course companies work best and then when you see something that is tripping you up, that's when you make your own. 11. Create A CPA Exam Final Review Study Funnel To DOMINATE On Exam Day [Most Crucial Step] Without a doubt, the MOST crucial period of your journey to passing any exam is the final 14 days prior to your exam. This is also known as your Final Review Period. You need to have a plan of attack for how you are going to ensure you remember what you need to know on exam day. Feeling overwhelmed about this process? I've got your back! Introducing the Final Review Study Funnel I want to share with you a study tactic that helped me pass the CPA exam (and more importantly has helped hundreds of my students recall what they need to on exam day). Its called a Final Review Study Funnel which is part of my CPA exam coaching course Ultimate CPA Exam Guide or Kesler. The entire concept behind this Final Review Study Funnel is for you to funnel out everything you already understand so that you can focus on topics you dont understand that you will need to know for exam day. This is a simple 14-day process that any accountant can implement. Lets get started! Phase 1: 14-4 Days Before Exam Your Final Review Study Funnel starts when you are 14 days out from your exam day. At this point you should be through all your study materials and have a decent grasp on the material (assuming you have made time to review the topics as you progress). Your goal in Phase 1 is NOT to learn new material, but to start reviewing everything you have learned. There are four steps you need to follow in this process: Step 1: Day 14 & 13 Before Exam Take two comprehensive practice exams over EVERYTHING on days 14 & 13. Pro Tip of The Day: For your practice exams, I'd take at least 100-120 multiple choice questions. Simulations or Essays arent an efficient way to study at this point in your Final Review Study Funnel. Pro Tip #2: If you feel like you are starting to see the same multiple-choice questions over and over it might also be time to invest in some fresh multiple-choice questions. I highly recommend the Gleim Megabank, its what I personally used to pass the CPA exam and will absolutely give you more than enough fresh questions to test your knowledge. Quick Link: [Gleim CPA Megabank](#) Step 2: Days 12-4 Before Exam Once you complete your practice exam(s), look at your results in your analytics looking for trends in the areas that you scored weaker. Any area you do not feel confident, record it and set aside an hour or two each day to deep dive into all those topics. Step 3: Days 12-4 Before Exam What does a Deep Dive look like? I recommend that depending on your learning style, you find those topics in your text book, find the video lectures, or even utilize your flashcards or notes and use these resources to ensure you UNDERSTAND the material and not just MEMORIZE it. When you understand the material, you will be able to find the right answer no matter what question is asked of you. After you have reviewed these struggle topics then I would create another practice exam specifically over those struggle topics to ensure you helped your understanding. Step 4: Days 12-4 Exam Repeat steps 1-3 over and over until 3 days prior to your exam. Phase 2: 3-2 Days Before Exam By this point you will have taken close to a dozen multiple choice practice exams with an overall focus of identifying your weaker areas and you should be feeling confident. Now its time to recreate the Prometric Center Holy Cow This is Actually Happening Type Test Taking Experience. Heres what you need to do: Step 1: Lock yourself in your room for the allotted time for your exam. Turn off your Cell Phone and close out of your social media on your computer and use this opportunity to do your very best to create a truly simulated exam experience. A great way to help you with this experience is to utilize the built in Exam Rehearsal feature that Gleim offers within each of their review courses. Its the closest thing to the real exam that I have found after reviewing close to a dozen CPA review courses. I highly recommend it. Step 2: Be sure to follow the rules for your exam. If theres a mandatory break, take it. If you are allowed scratch paper, use it. If your test is broken into testlets, go through each testlet, double check your answers and then move onto the next testlet and dont go back to the previous testlet and make changes just like you wouldnt be able to do on your exam. For essays and simulations follow exactly what you would be expected to do during the real exam as well. Step 3: Put pressure on yourself! Taking professional exams is more than just about understanding the material its about being MENTALLY prepared as well. Take these exams seriously. Step 4: Dont get discouraged if during these practice exams you dont receive a passing score. Remember, there are so many variables going into the grading of your real exam and even some questions that arent graded at all! Your grade on these practice exams is NOT an accurate representation of what your grade will be if it was the real thing. Just focus on time management and mental prep during these Exam Rehearsals and forget the rest! Phase 3: 1 Day Before Exam The day of reckoning is upon us! What should the final day before your exam look like? Well, heres what I did. NOTHING relaxed and took it easy. I had a ritual of watching one of my favorite movies Wall Street to help pump me up. I'd prepare a pre-exam playlist for my car ride over mostly the original Rocky Soundtrack. Then I would do some very light studying that involved reviewing some flashcards and re-reading my priority notes. But that was it. No practice exams no multiple choice or simulations. At this point you know your brain a well-deserved rest before exam day! And most importantly you can rest easy knowing you just completed your Final Review Study Funnel and will be able to walk confidently into your Prometric Center and dominate your exam! For more info on Final Review Study Funnels, check out [www.cpaexammentor.com](#) 12. Avoid CPA Exam Depression Know The Signs A dangerous side effect of taking the CPA exam is absolutely depression. Even if you are passing sections right and left you are not immune. Here are some big signs you may be experiencing CPA exam depression: Trouble eating or sleeping Mood swings Difficulty focusing at work Difficulty enjoying your your time with family and friends (feeling guilty for not studying) If any of these signs begin interfering with your life it may be time to take a break from the CPA exam and do something to get your mind off of studying. I always found treating myself to a night out at the ball park or going on a weekend get away was enough to recharge my batteries and get me focused again on what's important in my life. Check out this Podcast episode, I know it will help you stay motivated when the going gets tough. (iTunes Source) If you are still struggling with CPA exam depression then consider starting our free CPA Exam Coaching Video Series. It will help get you back on track. 13. Don't Spend Too Much Time On Practicing Simulations Simulations are random, are all designed differently and are typically focused on a specific topic. For this reason I don't recommend spending significant amount of time taking practice simulations. You absolutely need to use practice sims for time management, to understand the structure and the design of how to answer simulations efficiently, but using them as a study tool to learn the material is not efficient. Instead of taking hundreds of practice sims you are better off focusing on taking as many multiple choice as you can and focusing on the explanations for why the question is right or wrong. You will cover a wider variety of topics and it will help you understand the material much more effectively than taking hundreds of practice simulations. 14. Don't Forget About Friends & Family While Studying For The CPA Exam Far to often I see CPA Candidates forget about their friends and family when studying for the CPA exam. After a couple months go by they start to feel trapped in a bubble where they feel no one understands what they are going through. This is a dangerous situation to be in and can absolutely lead to CPA exam depression. Communication with family and friends is a must during this time. You need to utilize them as accountability partners to keep you focused on your ultimate goal. You also need to use them as rewards for hitting your study goals as well. I interviewed some awesome folks who can help you navigate the messy world of family and friends + studying for the CPA exam. Please sit down and listen with your family and friends. (iTunes Source) 15. Notify Your Employer Of Your CPA Exam Plan If you are working in public accounting, it's expected that you will be studying for the CPA exam. But if you aren't then you need to take extra care to communicate with your employer what you are going through and what your schedule is to take the CPA exam. MOST importantly is to keep your mouth shut around your peers. The last thing you want is for co-workers to pop into your cube asking how studying is going. Keep your head down, stay focused and let everyone know when you passed! You will also want to follow these 17 study tactics for CPA candidates working full time that helped me study better. To help you navigate communication with your employer, I interviewed a friend of mine Lucas Cherry who was working full time and we delve into how he managed studying and working a new job full time. Case Study #1: (iTunes Source) Case Study #2 Case Study #3 16. Lookout for the 30 Month CPA Exam Time Limit! One of the most cruel parts about the CPA exam is that once you pass your first section of the CPA exam an 30 Month countdown timer begins. If you are unable to pass the remaining 3 sections in that 30 Month time frame you will lose credit for your first section you passed and you will be forced to retake the exam. When I was studying for the CPA exam I passed FAR on a hail mary pass, meaning that I took FAR in the final window before I would have lost the first section I had passed. Thankfully I passed with flying colors but I know countless CPA candidates who were not as lucky as I. This is why planning which section to take last is almost as important as which one to take first. 17. Determine The Best Time To Study For The CPA Exam Every Day Are you a morning person or a night owl? Do you have a long commute? Take a long lunch? Eat dinner at work? Live near a coffee shop or library? These are all questions you need to answer when crafting your study routine. I highly advise that you utilize every second of your day to the fullest for two reasons: You maximize the amount of studying you get done every day So you have time every day to do something you want to do When I was studying for the CPA exam I determined I was a night owl and here is what my daily routine looked like during the week: Go to work at 8 Study for 45 minutes during lunch Get home by 5 Work out for 30-45 minutes Eat Dinner and shower Study from 7:30-10:30 Grab an adult beverage and watch a favorite TV show Go to bed and repeat Your routine will look very different than mine but the key takeaway is that you need to find your routine and stick to it! 18. Lack of Confidence Does Not Mean You Aren't Ready To Sit For The CPA Exam The CPA Exam is designed to make it so you never feel ready to sit for your next section. Is this cruel and unusual? Yes absolutely! But nothing worth having ever comes easy. Think of it this way, the worst that can happen is that if you fail you will lose a bit of money and some time. Compare this to healthcare, if you fail someone's life is at risk! Take comfort in the fact that if you screw up on the CPA exam no one is going to die! Study as hard as you can, stick to your deadlines and do the best you can. If your best isn't good enough to pass, then learn from your mistakes and repeat. If I can come back from failing all four sections in a row, I KNOW you can do this. For more info on HOW to gain more confidence, check out [www.cpaexammentor.com](#) 19. Your Mock CPA Exams Are For Testing Knowledge And Time Management The final week before your exam is going to be full of dry runs at taking the real deal. Simulated CPA exams are crucial to your success for two reasons. It tests your overall knowledge It allows you to practice time management Understanding the material is only half the battle of the CPA exam. You need to go into each section with a plan and you need to practice this plan as many times as possible. Each section is going to have multiple testlets and because of how the exam is designed, once you complete a testlet you can't go back to it. Here's what you need to do to prepare for each section of the CPA exam: Determine how much time to give yourself per testlet - typically no more than 45-60 minutes per testlet Save at least 10 minutes per testlet to double check your answers and for intelligent guessing Plan to take the optional break! Save yourself extra time for simulations Keep track of your time as you progress Practice Practice Practice! For more info on HOW to find time to study and pace yourself, check out [www.cpaexammentor.com](#) 20. Don't Let Passing or Failing A Section Of The CPA Exam Derail Your Motivation One of the most dangerous times in your journey to passing the CPA exam is right after you have failed or passed a section of the CPA exam. You will enter an extreme valley or an extreme peak that can lead to a complete lack of motivation to study. On one hand if you fail, you will feel hopeless and want to give up and you question why you are even studying for this exam. On the other hand if you pass, you will gain overconfidence and you will likely risk not studying nearly as hard. If either of these occur you need to fall back on your accountability partners to keep you focused on your ultimate goal of passing the CPA exam! And if you don't have anyone in your life to keep you accountable, focused and motivated then you need to find a CPA exam mentor like Monica did. Monica didn't let failing 9 times keep her from living her dream of passing the CPA exam. Which is why she found a CPA exam mentor! 21. Find A CPA Exam Mentor A common misconception is that the only tools you need to pass the CPA exam are hard work and a solid CPA Review Course. The problem with ONLY using these two tools is that you inevitably start re-creating the wheel. Meaning that you have to figure the following out all by yourself... Still have to figure out how to study the right way How to sign up for the CPA exam How to recover from failure (or passing) a section of the CPA exam Teach yourself complex accounting topics that you may not have learned in college Learn how to manage your stress levels Bottle up all your CPA exam emotions because no one else understands what you are going through And that's just half of what most CPA candidates experience! But there is another tool (or person) who can help you solve lifes frustrations with the CPA exam that you and your CPA review course can't easily do... What is a CPA Exam Mentor? When I was studying for the CPA exam I tried all kinds of different mentors... Shady Forums Random blogs & youtube videos that offered vague and only mildly useful advice... It wasn't until I finally sucked up my ego and asked the people in my life who had passed the CPA exam for advice did I actually make any progress or meaningful change in how I studied. What I learned from these successful CPA candidates is the reason I am a CPA today. In fact I created an entire mentorship method revolving what I learned and implemented from this advice. It's called the Ultimate CPA Exam Guide Method or as the cool kids call it, Kesler Method. I used this method to pass the CPA exam and have taught it to thousands of CPA candidates around the world since 2015 with unbelievable success. What is the Kesler Method? Now the Kesler Method in a nutshell is this: You need to optimize your three primary resources as a CPA candidate: 1) Your Time 2) Your CPA Review Course 3) Your CPA Exam Mentor(s) When these are properly optimized for your specific situation then something pretty cool happens You will have the PERFECT STUDY PLAN in place to achieve the PERFECT GRASP of the AICPA Blueprints. Then when you sit for the exam, regardless of what happens, you will have the PERFECT SUPPORT in place to keep you going no matter what happens. Now this is where things get very exciting (and why I'm a CPA today)... When you have the Perfect Study Plan + the Perfect Grasp of the AICPA blueprints + the Perfect Support team in place to keep you focused, organized and motivated you achieve what's called the ATOMIC EFFECT. This is another way of saying that you have become an unstoppable force of CPA passing power and you will stop at nothing until you have passed this beast of an exam. Interested in achieving the ATOMIC EFFECT? Check out [www.cpaexammentor.com](#) It's a free training that will walk you through the steps you need to follow in order to implement the Kesler Method + achieve the ATOMIC EFFECT. There is also an option to apply to join my premium mentorship program Ultimate CPA Exam Guide which is the single fastest way to achieving the Atomic Effect and passing the CPA exam with your specific CPA Review Course. The PEP Readiness Initiative is specifically for candidates preparing to start the Core 1 module. This initiative provides essential resources to boost technical readiness, time management skills, and study strategies before beginning the CPA Professional Education Program (PEP). These resources are designed to help candidates understand how to use available tools and approach Core 1 effectively. A 60-minute session that guides you through effective preparation techniques. It introduces the structure of Core 1 and provides tips for building study plans. The webinar also covers using tools like uWorld for adaptive learning and case writing tutorials to develop problem-solving skills essential for Core 1 and beyond. A one-on-one, 15-minute session with a CPAWSB Academic Advisor, offering personalized guidance tailored to your preparation needs. Advisors provide insights on structuring your study schedule, setting achievable goals, and suggesting specific technical areas you may need to review. Access to uWorld, an adaptive learning tool designed to strengthen your technical competencies. Through interactive practice questions and feedback, candidates can reinforce their foundational knowledge and identify areas that may need further attention. Tutorials focused on building case-writing skills that are vital for Core 1 and the CPA PEP. These tutorials help candidates understand how to structure responses, analyze case requirements, and apply technical knowledge effectively, setting a strong foundation for future modules and the Common Final Examination (CFE). The PEP Readiness Initiative starts each session the week after Core 1 registration ends. Available at no cost to all candidates registered for the upcoming Core 1 module. Resources are available on DZL within the Introduction to PEP upon enrollment with the School. This initiative ensures candidates enter Core 1 fully prepared, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed for success. For further assistance or questions about the initiative, contact us at [emailprotected].

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