

**HOW TO BUILD
A CFP® EXAM**

STUDY STRATEGY

THAT WORKS FOR YOU:

**5 TIPS TO GET YOU
STARTED ON THE PATH
TO SUCCESS!**



CFP BOARD

© 2024 Certified Financial
Planner Board of Standards, Inc.
All rights reserved

HOW TO BUILD A CFP® EXAM STUDY STRATEGY THAT WORKS FOR YOU

If you want to pass the CFP® exam, you need to understand a wide range of material and know how to apply your knowledge to financial planning situations. But how do you learn everything you need to know? The strategy that works for your colleague may not be right for you. This short guide will give you key tips to help you find the approach that fits your needs.

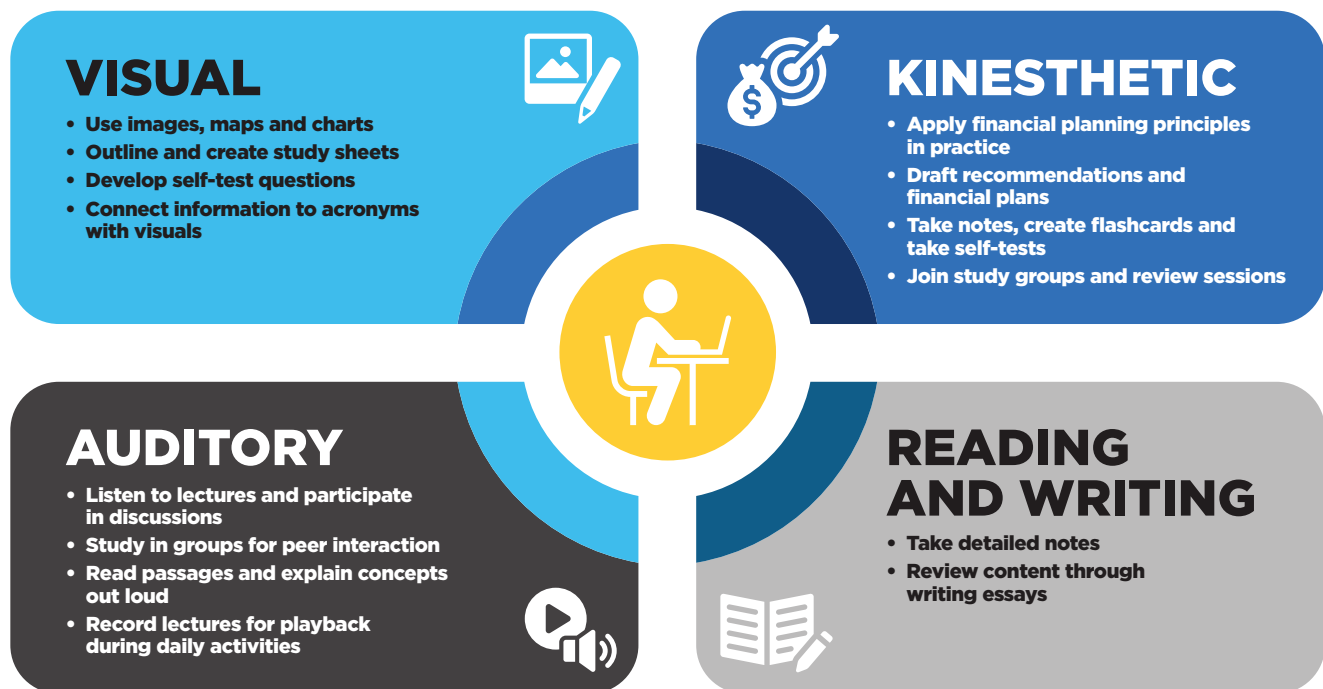


IDENTIFY YOUR LEARNING PREFERENCES

Before you open a book, take a step back and think about how you learn best. Each person is a little different – one person may retain information best after listening to it, while another needs to see the words in front of them. If you're not sure what your learning preference is, consider the tactics that

worked best when you completed coursework with a CFP Board Registered Program – or your last educational endeavor. What helped you remember and understand the things you were learning? You can also take a look at these categories and see which feels most natural to you.

LEARNING PREFERENCES:



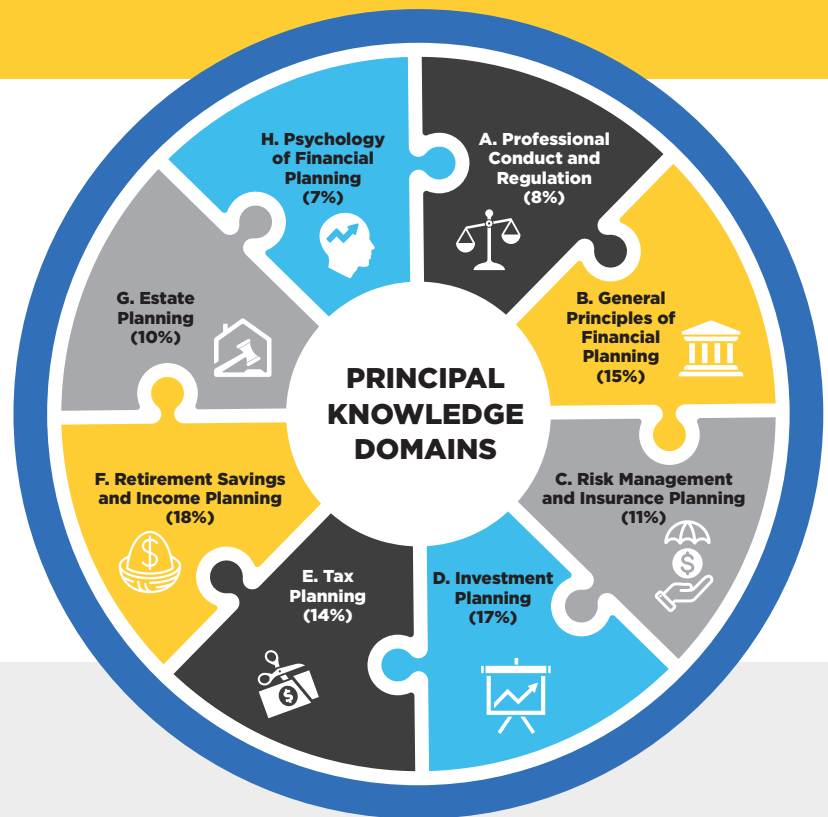
CFP® EXAM

STUDY STRATEGY



KNOW WHAT'S ON THE TEST

Once you've identified your learning preference, the next step is to take a look at the Principal Knowledge Domains that will be covered on the CFP® exam. Every exam includes questions about each of these topic areas; here's the breakdown of approximately how many of the 170 exam questions will be from each Domain.



EIGHT PRINCIPAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAINS

Your study plan should include time to review all the Knowledge Domains. However, the amount of time you need to spend on each area may vary. You may be more confident about some of these areas than others, based on your professional experience, previous education and personal interests. If you review tax documents in your current job, for example, you might feel more prepared to tackle tax planning questions.

What if you're not sure where your weak areas are? A great way to identify knowledge gaps is to take a practice exam early in your exam preparatory process. The CFP Board Practice Exam (complimentary with your CFP® exam registration) will provide you with results by knowledge domains so you can see which areas need the most attention.

Even if you're confident that you understand a few Knowledge Domains, be sure to review the topics before the examination. Look at the time between today and your exam date and **create a schedule for yourself** so you can be sure to allocate time for every Domain. If you choose to take a review course, your provider may give you a study schedule to follow. You can also find examples of how previous CFP® exam passers have prepared in the "[Candidates' Study Plans](#)" section on the Candidate Forum.

CFP[®] EXAM

STUDY STRATEGY



3

CHOOSE YOUR TACTICS

Now that you know your learning preference and the topics you need to cover, it's time to **choose the tactics that will help you learn the material in a way that works for you**. Successful CFP[®] exam takers often use a combination of these strategies.

- **Review Courses:** Many candidates find that taking a review course is a helpful way to prepare. These courses guide you through reviewing the exam material and often provide a structured study plan for you to follow, as well as helping you understand how to tackle the CFP[®] exam itself. Explore the different formats (in a classroom, online, self-study) to find one that fits your learning style.
- **Practice Exams:** Don't wait until your testing appointment to experience the CFP[®] exam. When you register for the CFP[®] exam, you'll receive complimentary access to the CFP Board Practice Exam; you can also purchase a second version to use in your review. These Practice Exams replicate the exam day experience and include questions that have been retired from previous CFP[®] exams. Make sure you take one - or both - as part of your preparation.
- **Test Questions:** Get access to a bank of practice questions that cover all the topics that will be tested on the CFP[®] exam. Many review courses include this resource, but you may also be able to purchase access separately. You can take questions while you're waiting in line or in between other tasks - it's a great way to sneak in a little extra prep when you don't have time for a full study session.
- **Study Groups or Partners:** Connect with other people who are preparing for the CFP[®] exam for accountability, support and help if you run into questions you don't understand. You might find study partners through your workplace or through the CFP Board Study Group Forum (a community within the Candidate Forum focused solely on CFP[®] exam prep).
- **Flashcards:** You can purchase pre-made flashcards or write your own on blank cards - think about what would work best for you! Like practice questions, flashcards allow you to review material whenever you have a few minutes throughout the day.
- **Mentor Support:** You may be helped by talking to someone who has passed the CFP[®] exam before and can support you as you prepare. You may be able to find someone like this at your firm, or you can enroll in the CFP Board Mentor Program to connect with a CFP[®] professional.

CFP® EXAM

STUDY STRATEGY



4

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Once you have the materials necessary for CFP® exam preparation, you need to ensure that you have the support and a conducive environment that will help you focus.

- **Talk to your employer:** Ask if you can use some work hours to study or if some responsibilities can be temporarily moved off your plate to give you more time to prepare.
- **Enlist community support:** Talk to your friends and family about what you are working to achieve. Let them know that you may need to say “no” to some opportunities for a little while.
- **Create a study zone:** Find a place where you can work without distraction. This could be your office, your kitchen table, a library or anywhere else that you can work without interruption.
- **Block off time on your calendar:** Schedule your study sessions like you would a doctor appointment or a meeting. Whenever possible, treat those appointments as non-negotiable and choose to show up for yourself. Try to plan for smaller blocks of time spread out across the week, not just very long sessions on the weekend.

5

FOLLOW YOUR PLAN

Now that you’ve put a plan together, **it’s time to stick with it.** You’ll have to navigate road bumps and it won’t be perfect – life is not going to pause for you to study – but remember that something is always better than nothing. Keep showing up. Put the time in. You cannot cram for the CFP® exam in a few weeks and expect to succeed. You need to put in the hours.

When you feel like quitting, take a breath, and remind yourself of why you’re doing this. In a few months, you will be on the other side of the exam and one step closer to becoming a CFP® professional. You’ll be so proud of yourself, and it will be time to celebrate. Keep your eyes on that finish line and draw strength from there.

CFP Board is here to support you as you prepare. Check out all the [exam prep resources](#) on our website if you need more assistance. We hope to welcome you as a CFP® professional in the very near future.



BUILD YOUR EXAM PLAN



Keep this checklist on hand to remember the key questions you should ask as you start preparing for the CFP® exam.



1

IDENTIFY YOUR LEARNING PREFERENCES

- Are you a visual, kinesthetic, auditory or reading and writing learner?



2

KNOW WHAT'S ON THE TEST

- Do you know the eight Principal Knowledge Domains that will be covered on the CFP® exam?
- Does your schedule include time for reviewing each Domain?



3

CHOOSE YOUR TACTICS

- What tools will you use in your preparation? Which ones align best with your learning preferences?
- Have you considered tactics like a review course, the CFP Board Practice Exams, sample questions, study partners, flashcards or support from a mentor?



4

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

- Where and when can you study without distraction?
- Have you enlisted your employer and your family and friends as support?



5

FOLLOW YOUR PLAN

- When will you review your plan to ensure you're sticking with it a few weeks and months down the road?
- Have you reached out to CFP Board for help with any questions that have arisen?



For more help with your study plan, visit the [CFP Board Study Group Forum](#) or explore the additional resources at [CFP.net/examprep](https://www.cfp.net/examprep).