

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Table of Contents

Copyright	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Questions	5
Answers	8
Explanations	10
Next Steps	16

Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

- 1. True or False: The AICPA's Code of Professional Conduct includes principles, rules, interpretations, and rulings.**
 - A. True**
 - B. False**
 - C. Only principles and rules**
 - D. Only definitions and interpretations**
- 2. How should a member handle pressure to adjust financial entries?**
 - A. Comply to maintain job security.**
 - B. Refuse and seek legal counsel.**
 - C. Discuss with peers before deciding.**
 - D. Document their decision and escalate matters.**
- 3. Does having a financial interest in an employee benefit plan impair an auditor's independence?**
 - A. Yes, it always does**
 - B. No, it does not impair independence**
 - C. Only if the plan is large**
 - D. Only if the financial interest is substantial**
- 4. What is the significance of understanding tax laws in tax planning?**
 - A. It helps in increasing the complexity of financial deals**
 - B. It allows for better negotiation of tax rates with authorities**
 - C. It aids in the reduction of potential tax liabilities**
 - D. It ensures compliance with corporate regulations**
- 5. What is the consequence for knowingly making false entries in financial records?**
 - A. Minor disciplinary action.**
 - B. No consequence if it's not reported.**
 - C. Serious violation of ethical standards.**
 - D. Only a warning from peers.**

- 6. What is the effect of recording depreciation on net income?**
- A. It increases the net income reported**
 - B. It has no effect on net income**
 - C. It decreases the net income reported**
 - D. It helps in enhancing investor perception**
- 7. What is the primary purpose of the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct?**
- A. To regulate financial reporting**
 - B. To enhance the quality of accounting practices**
 - C. To guide members in ethical behavior**
 - D. To enforce legal standards**
- 8. Is a CPA's independence impaired by serving on a citizens' committee studying a county's financial status if they audit that county?**
- A. Yes**
 - B. No**
 - C. It depends on the committee's purpose**
 - D. Only if compensated for service**
- 9. Can a partner serve as a director of a local charity and still maintain independence?**
- A. Yes, for charities that receive funds**
 - B. No, it always impairs independence**
 - C. Only if there are no direct financial ties**
 - D. It depends on the charity's financial health**
- 10. What purpose does a variance report serve?**
- A. To forecast future financial performance**
 - B. To compare budgeted performance with actual results**
 - C. To summarize company-wide expenses**
 - D. To track employee performance metrics**

Answers

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1. A
2. D
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. C
7. C
8. A
9. A
10. B

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Explanations

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1. True or False: The AICPA's Code of Professional Conduct includes principles, rules, interpretations, and rulings.

A. True

B. False

C. Only principles and rules

D. Only definitions and interpretations

The AICPA's Code of Professional Conduct indeed comprises principles, rules, interpretations, and rulings. This comprehensive framework is designed to guide CPAs in their ethical and professional responsibilities. The principles reflect the core values of the profession, such as integrity and objectivity, while the rules set forth specific guidelines that must be followed by members. Interpretations and rulings provide clarification and further guidance on how these principles and rules should be applied in various situations, ensuring that CPAs have the resources they need to uphold professional standards. Understanding that the Code includes all these components reinforces the importance of adhering to not only the established rules but also adhering to the underlying principles that guide ethical decision-making in accounting.

2. How should a member handle pressure to adjust financial entries?

A. Comply to maintain job security.

B. Refuse and seek legal counsel.

C. Discuss with peers before deciding.

D. Document their decision and escalate matters.

When faced with pressure to adjust financial entries, documenting the decision and escalating matters is the most appropriate course of action. This approach serves to protect the member's integrity and adherence to ethical standards within the profession. By documenting the decision, the member creates a clear record of the situation and their response, which is crucial in case there are future inquiries or investigations regarding the financial records or the pressures applied. Furthermore, escalating the matter means notifying a supervisor or another appropriate authority, ensuring that the issue is addressed at a higher level within the organization. This step not only highlights the seriousness of the pressure being applied but also helps safeguard the organization from potential risks associated with unethical financial reporting. In contrast, complying with the pressure may compromise professional integrity and could lead to significant legal and reputational consequences for both the individual and the organization. Seeking legal counsel might be seen as too reactive and could complicate the situation; while discussing with peers can provide support, it may not address the need for formal action regarding unethical requests.

3. Does having a financial interest in an employee benefit plan impair an auditor's independence?

- A. Yes, it always does**
- B. No, it does not impair independence**
- C. Only if the plan is large**
- D. Only if the financial interest is substantial**

When evaluating the impact of having a financial interest in an employee benefit plan on an auditor's independence, the key consideration is the nature of that interest. Generally, a financial interest in an employee benefit plan does not automatically impair an auditor's independence. This is because the independence rules established by the AICPA are designed to account for the type of relationships and interests that may affect an auditor's objectivity and professional skepticism. Having an interest in a typical employee benefit plan—such as a retirement plan or health insurance plan—does not compromise independence as long as the interest is considered to be in the normal course of employment and is not significant enough to influence the auditor's judgment regarding the financial statements of the audited entity. Furthermore, the independence rules allow for certain financial interests if they are not material or do not result in the auditor being in a position to influence the outcomes of audits for their clients adversely. Therefore, the scenario presented in the question supports the view that possessing an ordinary financial interest in an employee benefit plan is generally not perceived as compromising to an auditor's independence. This reflects a nuanced understanding of independence that focuses on the materiality and potential conflicts of interest inherent in the specific financial relationships involved.

4. What is the significance of understanding tax laws in tax planning?

- A. It helps in increasing the complexity of financial deals**
- B. It allows for better negotiation of tax rates with authorities**
- C. It aids in the reduction of potential tax liabilities**
- D. It ensures compliance with corporate regulations**

Understanding tax laws is a critical component of tax planning because it provides individuals and businesses with the knowledge needed to minimize their tax liabilities legally. By being informed about current tax regulations, deductions, credits, and exemptions, taxpayers can structure their finances and investments in ways that reduce the amount of taxable income. This strategic approach enables individuals and businesses to keep more of their earnings, thus improving their overall financial position. Additionally, comprehending tax laws facilitates proactive decision-making regarding timing and types of income recognition, expenses that may be deductible, and the effective use of tax incentives. This knowledge empowers taxpayers to navigate complex tax situations, take advantage of favorable tax treatments, and ultimately plan their affairs in a manner that aligns with their financial goals while adhering to the legal framework. The other options, while they may seem relevant, do not capture the central objective of understanding tax laws in the context of tax planning as effectively as the chosen answer does.

5. What is the consequence for knowingly making false entries in financial records?

- A. Minor disciplinary action.**
- B. No consequence if it's not reported.**
- C. Serious violation of ethical standards.**
- D. Only a warning from peers.**

Knowingly making false entries in financial records represents a serious violation of ethical standards, particularly within the context of accounting and finance. Such actions undermine the integrity of financial reporting and can have far-reaching consequences, both for the individual and the organization involved. From a professional standpoint, the AICPA has established a strict code of ethics that mandates honesty and integrity in all financial practices. Violating this code can lead to significant disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion from the AICPA, legal ramifications, and damage to one's professional reputation. Furthermore, false entries can mislead stakeholders, including investors, regulators, and the general public, leading to a loss of trust and potential financial harm. Ethical standards are designed to uphold transparency and reliability in financial reporting, making breaches in this area a severe concern. While other choices may suggest lesser consequences such as minor disciplinary action or warnings, they do not accurately reflect the gravity of the occurrence. Reporting false entries is essential; even if they go unreported, the violation itself still exists and has ethical implications that necessitate accountability.

6. What is the effect of recording depreciation on net income?

- A. It increases the net income reported**
- B. It has no effect on net income**
- C. It decreases the net income reported**
- D. It helps in enhancing investor perception**

Recording depreciation decreases the net income reported on the income statement. Depreciation is an expense that represents the allocation of the cost of a long-term asset over its useful life. When a business records depreciation, it is essentially recognizing a non-cash expense that reduces the taxable income of the business. As a result, net income, which is calculated as revenues minus expenses, is directly impacted. When depreciation is recorded, it increases the total expenses for the period, thereby lowering the net income. This is important for financial reporting, as it allows for a more accurate reflection of the asset's usage and the economic reality surrounding the asset's value as time passes. Understanding the implications of depreciation is crucial for comprehending how businesses manage their earnings and prepare for taxes. It also provides insight into cash flow, as while depreciation reduces net income, it does not result in an actual cash outflow during the accounting period, which can influence financial decision-making and analyses.

7. What is the primary purpose of the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct?

- A. To regulate financial reporting**
- B. To enhance the quality of accounting practices**
- C. To guide members in ethical behavior**
- D. To enforce legal standards**

The primary purpose of the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct is to guide members in ethical behavior. This code provides a framework for ethical decision-making and establishes standards of professional conduct for CPAs. It emphasizes integrity, objectivity, independence, and professional behavior, which are essential attributes for maintaining public confidence in the accounting profession. While enhancing the quality of accounting practices and regulating financial reporting are crucial aspects of the profession, they are not the main focus of the Code itself. The Code serves as a foundation for ethical conduct, helping CPAs navigate complex situations that may arise in their professional duties. Additionally, while there are legal standards that accountants must adhere to, the enforcement of such standards typically falls under regulatory bodies rather than being a primary function of the AICPA Code. Therefore, guiding ethical behavior is the central aim of this code, ensuring that its members conduct their work with professionalism and integrity.

8. Is a CPA's independence impaired by serving on a citizens' committee studying a county's financial status if they audit that county?

- A. Yes**
- B. No**
- C. It depends on the committee's purpose**
- D. Only if compensated for service**

Independence is a fundamental principle for CPAs, especially when it comes to performing audits. When a CPA serves on a citizens' committee that is studying the financial status of a county they audit, this involvement can create a conflict of interest. Being part of such a committee may lead to situations where the CPA could be perceived as biased or lacking objectivity since their role may involve influencing financial decisions or policies that could directly affect the audit process. The appearance of impartiality is crucial in maintaining public trust in financial reporting and audit findings. Thus, participation in the committee may compromise the CPA's independence in both fact and appearance. While factors like compensation or the specific purpose of the committee could theoretically affect the assessment of independence, the overwhelming consideration is the direct link between the CPA's audit responsibilities and their participation in the committee. Therefore, service on the committee inherently raises questions about the auditor's ability to remain independent, and thus it is deemed to impair independence outright.

9. Can a partner serve as a director of a local charity and still maintain independence?

- A. Yes, for charities that receive funds**
- B. No, it always impairs independence**
- C. Only if there are no direct financial ties**
- D. It depends on the charity's financial health**

When considering the independence of a partner serving as a director of a local charity, it is important to acknowledge that independence is generally related to any financial connections or relationships that could impair objectivity. In many situations, a partner can indeed maintain independence while serving in such a capacity, especially in cases where the charity does not have a significant financial relationship with the firm. The option stating that yes, for charities that receive funds, outlines a specific context regarding the type of charity. If the funds received by the charity do not come to the partner's firm, or if the partner does not directly benefit from the charity's financial transactions, their service on the board would not necessarily impair their independence. It's crucial that the partner remains objective, and their role in the charity does not lead to a conflict of interest with their professional responsibilities. Other considerations, such as the nature of the charity's funding sources or the financial relationship between the charity and the firm, can be relevant. However, within the scope of charitable organizations that do not have direct financial ties to the partner's firm, independence can be preserved. This nuance is essential for understanding independence in professional accounting standards regarding charitable involvement.

10. What purpose does a variance report serve?

- A. To forecast future financial performance**
- B. To compare budgeted performance with actual results**
- C. To summarize company-wide expenses**
- D. To track employee performance metrics**

A variance report primarily serves to compare budgeted performance with actual results. This tool is essential in financial and management accounting because it highlights discrepancies between what was planned and what actually occurred. By analyzing these differences, management can identify areas that may require attention, investigate the reasons behind variances, and make informed decisions to improve future performance. The focus on comparing planned versus actual outcomes allows organizations to assess their performance efficiently and adjust their strategies as necessary. This analysis can include exploring variances in various categories, such as sales volume, expenditures, and production costs. Recognizing whether performance is better or worse than expected enables businesses to respond proactively. While forecasting future financial performance, summarizing company-wide expenses, and tracking employee performance metrics are important activities within an organization, they do not encapsulate the core function of a variance report. Rather, variance analysis is specifically designed to improve budgetary control and operational efficiency by providing insights into financial performance discrepancies.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://aicpa.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!