

# CPA Exam Application Process

After years of hard work in the classroom and hours of tedious studying with CPA review courses, applying to the CPA exam should be the last thing to stress about. The main steps of the CPA exam application process are the same nationwide with slight variations from state to state. It's important to follow these steps so you do not forget any required information that could delay your application. If you follow my steps outlined below, you can be approved to schedule your first exam in 4 to 6 weeks. I'm here to take you through the application process step by step so you have one less thing to worry about.

## 1. Before Applying

You have to qualify for the exam before you can apply. Make sure that you have met all the state requirements.. Once you have met all the qualifications, you need to read the [Candidate Bulletin](#). This is the most important thing to do before taking the exam since every aspect of the exam is outlined here, from applying to receiving scores. Examination coordinator Seth Goodowens said he cannot emphasize enough to candidates how important it is to familiarize themselves with the Candidate Bulletin before applying.

Once you are familiar with the the organization of the CPA exam, you must order all of your transcripts and send them in before applying. I recommend doing this before sending in your application to decrease the chances of slowing down the application process if there is any course work missing.

## 2. Apply

Now that you have confirmed your eligibility and sent in all of the required paperwork, you can begin the filling out the application. Take your time and make sure all your information is consistent and accurate. Patricia Hartman, an Examination Coordinator from NASBA, said one of the most common errors she sees that causes delays are mistakes with a candidate's name on the application. You will also be required to submit an application fee around \$150 (this changes depending on state).

## 3. Receive Authorization to Test (ATT) from your State Board

Most States give you 90 days to decide which sections you want to sit for, otherwise your application fee will be forfeited if you do not send payment for your section(s). Go to the [NASBA's website](#) to see what sections you wish to sign up for. Make sure you read the next step before paying, because I recommended you start with one or two sections.

## 4. Receive Notice to Schedule (NTS) from NASBA

Your NTS is the official document that authorizes you to sit for the CPA exam in the U.S. This can take anywhere between 3-6 weeks to receive. Some states, like California, will let you apply

online and get your NTS the same day. Each state has its own NTS “validation period”, meaning you have limited time to take the exams you signed up for. Except for a handful of states such as Texas and California, all jurisdictions have established a six month NTS validation period, which actually translates to about four full months to take your previously selected sections.

That is why it’s not a good idea to sign up and pay for all four sections, even if it might seem cheaper to buy all four together. It’s very difficult to pass all four sections in four months. And you end up forfeiting the money you spent on any untaken test once your validation period has ended. I suggest scheduling and paying for 2 sections for your validation period, then reapply for the next two sections six months later.

### **5. Schedule your Exam(s)**

Go to the Prometric website and click the “Schedule My Test” button. Choose the state you wish to test in and enter your exam section ID and the first four letters of your last name. You will then be able to select the date, location, and section of the exam you wish to take. I suggest scheduling your exams at least 3-4 weeks in advance.

If you choose to reschedule your exam more than 30 days in advance, there is no penalty. You must pay \$35 if you reschedule 5-30 days in advance and FULL price if your 1-5 days in advance. Unfortunately, you are not allowed to reschedule less than 24 hours before the exam and must reapply.

### **6. Take your Exam**

You’ve made it to test day! Make sure you bring your NTS with you to the testing site or else you can’t take the test. This can be a frustrating mistake to make after spending months worrying about the test material. You must also present TWO forms of identification, one of which including a recent photograph. Good luck!

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*Jess Davis has helped hundreds of students pass the CPA Exam with study tips and strategies on her review website [Beat The CPA](#). Jess wants to make the preparation journey as easy as possible for future test takers. Outside of the accounting world, she likes camping, climbing, and being outdoors away from the world of numbers.*