



To survive the CFE, you won't need duct tape; you won't need matches; and we certainly don't recommend that you play dead. But you might benefit from some survival tips from recent successful CFE writers—from how to build confidence to how to prepare.

## BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE

### Prep yourself mentally

Remember: this is **only** an exam. Yes, it's a big, important one that you've worked very hard to prepare for; but ultimately, it's just an exam—like so many others that you have passed before this. The exam is not life or death, and it is certainly not the be-all and end-all.

Also, the test is not set up for you to fail. **You** are set up to pass the exam. You can do it!

“Trust yourself—you’ve worked this hard and gotten this far for a reason... you’ll get through CFE as well.”

—Nimra Mehmud, CPA (Passed 2018 CFE)

## CONQUER THE CFE

### General tips on tackling the exam

Treat the CFE like your practice cases, and you will be able to tackle it no problem. You are prepared for this. Follow your methodology and your approach.

### The mornings of the exam

- Arrive early
- Get set up, get comfortable

There **will** be curveballs on the exam. Stay calm. Know that everyone else will also be stumped. Take a deep breath, do your best to find some criteria, apply case facts, and come to a conclusion.

Then MOVE ON.  
Stay within your time budgets.



“If you get stuck, either move on and come back, or if you’re *really* stuck, walk to the bathroom and wash your hands. Getting away from my laptop screen helped me remember a few things on multiple occasions.”

—Chelsey Craig, CPA (Passed 2017 CFE)

## PRACTICE MAX SELF CARE

### What to do the week of the CFE, when you're not writing (hint: take care of yourself!)

Make sure you're taking care of yourself physically; sleep, exercise, and nutrition can all impact brain function and anxiety levels.

Ensure your support system knows what you need. Reach out to them if you need help, but don't be afraid to be selfish if you need time alone.

Don't study. Only briefly review your approach for each day.

Relax. Take some time for yourself.

Do not talk to any other writers about the exam.

If you NEED to talk about the CFE, call a mentor or friend who can calm you down so you can move on.

Do NOT go on CFE Reddit threads.



## BE PREPARED

### What to bring (and what not to bring) to the CFE

As much as possible, bring items that will help you imitate the environment in which you studied for the CFE; it is important to write the way you studied.

Remember to review CPA Canada's Examination Regulations to ensure you adhere to all rules, including those that dictate what you are (and are not) allowed to bring with you to write the CFE.

#### Food and drink

Bring water and any other beverage you regularly drink in the morning.

Bring easy-to-eat, non-distracting, filling snacks (like sliced fruit). Bring more than you think you'll need (using your brain uses a lot of energy!).



#### Attire

Be prepared: wear layers!

#### Supplies

Bring multiples of whatever you use when planning/writing your cases. Get set up as soon as you arrive and ensure that everything is running smoothly (plug-in is working, etc.).



## PLAN AHEAD

### How to approach each day

#### Day 1:

Remind yourself of the main aspects of the original Capstone 1 case: users/their objectives, SWOT, KSFs, mission, vision, values, original strategic options, operational issues, etc. If you have a one or two-page write-up with all of this information, review it the day before the exam.

"Know which 'hat' to put on each morning!"  
—Vicky Cato (Passed 2018 CFE)

#### Day 2:

Plan the case efficiently as you read through it, and allocate your time effectively between AOs. Remember that your aim here is DEPTH—ensure that you're focused on your role. Don't skip any Financial Reporting or Management Accounting issues though.

#### Day 3:

Be VERY AWARE of your time allocations, and do NOT steal time from one case for another. Focus on demonstrating the CORE level of knowledge and providing a balanced discussion (quantitative and qualitative). Move on once you're satisfied that your response is SUFFICIENT (as opposed to PERFECT).



“The CFE is probably the most intense exam most of you will ever have to write. The CFE has been written by numerous candidates in the past and most of us have done well.”

—Adrian Serban, CPA (Passed 2016 CFE)

## SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP

### CPA Assist

From exam anxiety and stress, to self-care and time management strategies, CPA Assist can help. As the profession's confidential health and wellness program, CPA Assist provides FREE professional counselling service, as well as nutrition and fitness consultations for Alberta CPAs, candidates and their immediate family.

Call 1-855-596-4222

Or visit [cpa-assist.ca](http://cpa-assist.ca)

**Best of luck on the CFE!**  
**CPA Alberta's Employer Relations Team**  
**is rooting for you.**



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