TCP Study Guide

Tax Compliance and Planning

Atlas CPA Index — 2026 Edition

Pass Rate: **80%** | Study Hours: **60-80** | Timeline: **6-8 weeks** | Type: **Discipline**

What This Section Tests

TCP tests advanced tax compliance, planning strategies, and personal financial planning. It builds on REG knowledge and goes deeper into entity taxation, estate planning, and tax strategy optimization. TCP rewards candidates who can think like tax advisors.

Exam Format

Duration	MCQs	TBS	MCQ Weight	TBS Weight
4 hours	68	7	50%	50%

Content Area Breakdown

Area	Content	Weighting
I	Tax Compliance and Planning for Individuals and Personal Financial Planning	**30-40%**
II	Entity Tax Compliance	**30-40%**
III	Entity Tax Planning	**10-20%**
IV	Property Transactions	**10-20%**

Suggested Study Path

TCP — 60-80 hours over 6-8 weeks at 15-20 hours/week

Recommended Topic Sequence

#	Topic	Rationale	Time
1	**Entity Tax Topics**	Study first while REG knowledge is fresh. Partnership specials, S-corp advanced topics, entity comparison.	**35%**
2	**Individual Tax Planning & Estate/Gift**	Heaviest area within Area I. Estate planning is the deepest new content beyond REG.	**30%**
3	**Entity Selection & Compensation Strategies**	Tax planning scenarios — the "advisor" portion of the exam.	**20%**
4	**Property Transactions & Exempt Organizations**	Reinforces REG concepts with planning-oriented questions.	**15%**

Study Dependencies

TCP assumes a REG-level understanding of individual and entity taxation. If you have not yet passed REG, study TCP immediately after REG while the knowledge is fresh. Entity tax topics should come first because they build directly on REG entity content. Estate/gift planning introduces new content beyond REG and should follow entity topics.

Hardest Topics — Allocate Extra Time

- Estate tax planning (unified credit, portability, GSTT)
- Entity selection optimization (comparing C-corp, S-corp, partnership, sole proprietor)
- Passive activity vs at-risk limitation interplay
- AMT planning strategies
- Equity compensation tax implications (ISOs vs NQSOs)

Weekly Study Timeline

Weeks	Phase	Focus Area
Weeks 1-2	Learning	Entity tax compliance: C-corp, S-corp, partnership advanced topics
Weeks 3-4	Learning + Practice	Individual planning, estate/gift taxation, personal financial planning
Weeks 5-6	Practice	Entity selection, compensation strategies, property transactions, exempt orgs
Weeks 7-8	Review	OBBBA provisions, mock exams, planning scenario drills

Blueprint Update — July 1, 2026

The TCP exam blueprint updated July 1, 2026 for One Big Beautiful Bill Act provisions, which are now testable. Testable content on the planning side includes: permanent TCJA individual brackets and deductions (eliminating sunset scenarios), restored 100% bonus depreciation (entity-level planning strategies), SALT cap increase to $40,000 ($40,400 for 2026) with phase-out for high earners, no-tax-on-tips and overtime pay deduction planning for individual clients, and Trump Accounts for children born 2025-2028.

Topic Checklist & Practice Tracker

TCP — Check off topics as you master them

Individual Tax Compliance & Personal Financial Planning (30-40%)

- [ ] Gross income, AGI, taxable income calculations
- [ ] Estimated tax payments and withholding
- [ ] Equity compensation (ISOs, NQSOs, RSUs)
- [ ] Alternative Minimum Tax planning
- [ ] Passive activity and at-risk limitations
- [ ] Gift tax compliance and annual exclusion
- [ ] Estate tax calculation and unified credit
- [ ] Generation-skipping transfer tax (GSTT)
- [ ] Personal financial planning strategies

Entity Tax Compliance (30-40%)

- [ ] C corporation advanced topics (PHC, accumulated earnings tax)
- [ ] S corporation basis, distributions, and built-in gains
- [ ] Partnership special allocations and guaranteed payments
- [ ] Partnership distributions (current and liquidating)
- [ ] Multi-entity structures and consolidated returns
- [ ] Tax-exempt organization compliance (Form 990)

Entity Tax Planning (10-20%)

- [ ] Entity selection and formation planning
- [ ] Compensation planning (salary vs distributions)
- [ ] Retirement plan selection (401k, SEP, SIMPLE)
- [ ] Business succession planning
- [ ] Tax-efficient entity restructuring

Property Transactions (10-20%)

- [ ] Basis determination and cost recovery
- [ ] Section 1031 like-kind exchanges (planning)
- [ ] Installment sales
- [ ] Related party transactions
- [ ] Involuntary conversions and planning elections

MCQ Score Tracker

Date	Content Area	Score %	Target %

TBS Practice Log

Date	Simulation Topic	Result

Exam Readiness Self-Assessment

- [ ] I score 70%+ consistently on TCP MCQ sets
- [ ] I can complete a TBS within the time budget without hints
- [ ] I have reviewed all content areas at least twice
- [ ] I have taken at least one full-length mock exam
- [ ] I can explain the hardest topics without referencing notes

Study Tips & Resources

TCP — Section-specific strategies

TCP Study Tips

Tip 1

TCP is the "so what" exam — every compliance question has a planning dimension. When practicing, always ask: "How would I advise a client to minimize tax here?" That framing matches how the exam tests.

Tip 2

If you just passed REG, start TCP immediately. Overlap is significant and recency is a massive advantage. Candidates who wait 3+ months lose that edge.

Tip 3

Estate planning is the biggest new content area beyond REG. Spend dedicated time on the unified credit, portability, and generation-skipping transfer tax. These are not covered on REG.

Tip 4

For entity selection questions, build a comparison matrix: C-corp vs S-corp vs partnership vs sole proprietor. Compare on self-employment tax, double taxation, basis rules, and loss limitations.

Exam Day Time Management

Time per MCQ:	Time per TBS:	Exam Duration:
~1.5 minutes	**~18 minutes**	**4 hours**

TCP has 68 MCQs and 7 TBS at 50/50 weighting. Budget 102 minutes for MCQs and 126 minutes for TBS. Tax planning TBS often include multi-step scenarios — read the full question before calculating.

Trusted Resources

- NASBA — nasba.org — Official exam info, score releases, state requirements
- AICPA — aicpa-cima.com — Exam blueprints, practice exams, ethics
- Your State Board — CPA requirements specific to your jurisdiction
- Atlas CPA Index — atlascpaindex.com — Compare all CPA review courses

Disclaimer: This study path is a suggested sequence based on common candidate experiences, topic dependencies, and review course curricula. It is not endorsed by the AICPA or NASBA, and is not a guarantee of exam performance. Individual results depend on your preparation, background, and study effort. Pass rates and exam format reflect NASBA data as of early 2026 and are subject to change.