



LEADING YOU FORWARD

Becoming a CFP : A Comprehensive Guide



CORNERSTONE FINANCIAL NETWORK



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WHAT IS A CFP?

CFP® certification signifies expertise in key areas of financial planning, including:

- Investment Management
- Retirement Planning
- Tax Planning
- Estate Planning
- Insurance & Risk Management
- Financial Planning Principles
- Education Planning
- Cash Flow & Debt Management
- Business Planning

The Certified Financial Planner (CFP®) designation is widely recognized as the gold standard in the financial planning industry. It signifies that an individual has met rigorous education, examination, and experience requirements while upholding a strict code of ethics.

WHY GET CFP CERTIFIED?

89%

of CFP professionals reported being satisfied with their decision to earn their CFP certification.*



Earning your CFP® certification is a **career game-changer**, positioning you as a top-tier financial expert with **enhanced credibility, higher earning potential, and access to more prestigious opportunities**. Employers and clients value the expertise that comes with CFP® certification, giving you a **competitive edge in the industry**. It also equips you with **advanced knowledge, rigorous training, and real-world experience**—allowing you to provide comprehensive, personalized financial guidance. Whether you aspire to manage high-net-worth clients, lead a financial planning team, or build a thriving practice, **CFP® certification opens doors to career growth while enabling you to make a meaningful impact on people’s financial futures.**

THE DATA



87%

of CFP professionals
report being satisfied
with their career choice.

85%

of CFP professionals
report experiencing
personal fulfillment in
their careers.

82%

CFPs who rated
their job high in
work/life
balance

88%

CFPs who rated
their job stability
as “good” or
“excellent”

81%

CFPs who reported
their certification
gives them a
competitive edge

CFP® professionals consistently earn top-tier incomes, with many studies reporting median annual earnings between **\$210,000** and **\$250,000**. Experienced advisors see even greater financial success—according to an AITE Group study, solo CFP® practitioners with 12+ years in the field generated a median annual revenue of **\$450,000**, while those in team-based practices averaged **\$650,000**.



DID YOU KNOW?

Beyond income, a well-established financial planning practice becomes a valuable asset. As client relationships grow, so does the business's equity—creating long-term wealth and the potential for a lucrative sale in the future.



Steps to CFP Certification

Did you know?

You don't need a bachelor's degree to take the CFP exam, but you will need one to become certified. Your degree can be in any field, so long as it is from an accredited institution.

EDUCATION

Complete a series of financial planning courses through a program registered with the CFP® board. Certificants are also required to hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

EXAM

Pass a rigorous, comprehensive exam designed to assess both technical knowledge and real-world application of financial planning concepts. The exam includes case studies and scenario-based questions across a broad range of financial planning areas.

EXPERIENCE

Candidates must gain real-world experience applying financial planning principles. This can be fulfilled through 6,000 hours of professional work or 4,000 hours in a structured, supervised apprenticeship. Experience may be completed before or after the exam, as long as it meets certification standards.

ETHICS

Candidates must submit an ethics declaration, pass a background check, and agree to adhere to the CFP® Board's Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct. They also commit to acting as a fiduciary at all times—putting their clients' interests first. These ethical obligations must be continuously upheld to maintain certification.

Frequently Asked Questions

01. How is a CFP different from a non-certified financial planner?

The CFP® designation signals a higher level of credibility, backed by rigorous education, a comprehensive exam, real-world experience, and a strict code of ethics. This sets CFP® professionals apart as trusted experts in the field—recognized for their depth of knowledge and fiduciary duty to put clients first. Earning the CFP® mark gives you a competitive advantage, unlocking better career opportunities, leadership potential, and higher income. CFPs make, on average, 10% more than non-certified financial planners.

02. How long does it take to get your CFP certification?

The CFP Board estimates that, for most candidates, the journey to certification takes about 18 to 24 months from start to finish. This period allows you to complete coursework, prepare for and pass a comprehensive exam, and gain the necessary real-world experience. However, timelines can vary based on your schedule, chosen program, and whether you've already earned a bachelor's degree—an essential requirement for certification.

03. Is it hard to get your CFP certification?

Earning your CFP® certification requires real effort and dedication—but that's exactly what makes it so respected. The process is designed to ensure you're well-qualified, with the knowledge, experience, and ethical grounding to guide clients with confidence. With the right mindset and support, it's a rewarding achievement that can elevate your career for years to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

04. What is the CFP Exam like?

The CFP® exam includes 170 multiple-choice questions that evaluate how well you can apply financial planning concepts to practical, real-world scenarios. You'll have 6 hours to complete the exam, broken up into two 3-hour sessions split by a scheduled break.

05. What topics are covered on the CFP Exam?

The Certified Financial Planner (CFP®) exam evaluates candidates' proficiency across several key financial planning domains, including Professional Conduct and Regulation, General Principles of Financial Planning, Risk Management and Insurance Planning, Investment Planning, Tax Planning, Retirement Savings and Income Planning, Estate Planning, and the Psychology of Financial Planning. These topics encompass a comprehensive range of financial planning areas, ensuring that certified professionals are well-equipped to address diverse client needs effectively.

06. How long does CFP certification last?

CFP certification requires annual renewal. To stay certified, you must also complete 30 hours of continuing education every two years, including 2 hours focused on CFP® Board-approved ethics content. In addition, you must continue to follow the CFP® Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct and may be subject to periodic background checks to confirm your ongoing eligibility.

How Cornerstone Supports CFP Learning



P.A.T.H.

Professional Advisor Training Hub

Cornerstone Financial Network is committed to developing and empowering quality financial professionals. **Our one-of-a-kind PATH program provides the essential training, resources, and structured guidance needed to navigate the CFP® certification process with confidence and efficiency.**

Expert
Mentorship

Real-World
Training

Step-by-Step
Support

Network
Building

Commission
Opportunities

Relentlessly Training Toward Perfection



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