

Financial Planning and Tax Strategies

Course Description

This course integrates federal taxation with overall financial planning. It will explore tax strategies relating to the central financial tactics of wealth building, capital preservation, and estate distribution. The result is a unified explanation of tax-economics that will permit the tax professional to locate, analyze, and solve financial concerns. Designed to improve the quality of services to clients and the profitability of engagements, this program projects the accountant into the world of financial planning. This course will give the participant practice in analyzing problems, developing solutions, and presenting final personal financial plans to clients. The emphasis is on practical simplicity in dealing with the self-employed and highly compensated individual.

Completion Deadline & Exam: This course, including the examination, must be completed within one year of the date of purchase. In addition, unless otherwise indicated, no correct or incorrect feedback for any exam question will be provided.

Course Level: Overview. This program is appropriate for professionals at all organizational levels.

CPE Credits: 14 (CPA, EA)

Category: Taxation

Prerequisite: General understanding of federal income taxation.

Advanced Preparation: None

Course Learning Objectives

Chapter 1: Financial Tax Planning

1. Identify short-term financial goals and investment purposes, recognize the importance of defining, citing prioritized realistic goals noting how investing allocation changes with age.
2. Determine the tax consequences of title holding methods by:
 - a. Specifying ways to hold title to assets starting with the simplest and most direct way to hold property;
 - b. Cite the tax benefits and drawbacks of co-tenancies, corporations (both C & S), partnerships, qualified retirement plans, and trusts particularly as they relate to a client's after-tax investment return; and

- c. Identifying custodianship under the uniform acts and determining how an estate can be tax beneficial to taxpayers.
3. Recognize the impact of retirement planning postponement noting the importance of early planning using the author's suggested step process, specify a balance sheet method to plan retirement, determine how to diversify portfolios by balancing liquid and nonliquid assets, and identify the purpose of savings noting strategies to save.

Chapter 2: Building an Estate

1. Identify money management noting income types, recognize causes of increased taxable income for itemizing taxpayers, and specify taxable income types and their proper reporting.
2. Determine the distinctions between tax-free municipal bonds from fringe benefits in generating tax-free income, cite the benefits of tax deferral, and identify tax-deferred investments.
3. Specify ways to shelter income noting how income sheltering amplifies investment return.
4. Recognize the budgeting of income into cash by containing expenditures with the author's step process and discretionary income development, identify a client's negative outlook on budgeting and counter strategies, determine how to convert income into assets by purchasing investments, and specify asset acquisition rules.
5. Specify tax-advantage investments noting management rules, and determine the economic impact of accelerating deductions, postponing tax liability, and leveraging.

Chapter 3: Preservation of Wealth

1. Identify spending habits noting how to design a budget to increase discretionary income, determine net worth using a balance sheet, and select assets and liabilities for an inventory on which to base financial goals.
2. Specify why individuals should take primary responsibility for the investment planning including necessary self-education, determine the allocation of financial resources among investments to maximize return, and recognize the impact of inflation, risk versus return, and basic income tax planning tactics.

Chapter 4: Deferral

1. Identify the benefits of tax deferral, recall the former use of tax deferral under §1034, and cite the tax deferral advantage under §1031 noting its elements.
2. Specify the related party §1031 restrictions identifying prohibited parties or entities and permissible disposition exceptions, cite recommendations for the protection of exchange participants, and recognize the history of the personal and multiple property regulations noting the unique personal property like-kind and netting requirements for multiple asset exchanges.

3. Recall the evolution of delayed exchanges noting allowable transfers, determine how to select qualified replacement property, specify constructive receipt safe harbors & methods to secure exchange party performance, cite the §1031 partnership underlying asset rule, identify retirement plan design, identify popular methods for providing for retirement, and select near retirement investments.
4. Specify the requirements for an installment sale, determine how to elect out of the installment method, identify the variables affecting §453 availability, and determine how to use a property option to receive income and postpone tax.

Chapter 5: Reduction

1. Identify tax credits noting qualified computational expenses, limitations and restrictions.
2. Recognize the estimated tax rules and procedures including payment deadlines, underpayment penalties and the economics of overpaying estimated taxes, and specify the nondeductible interest types.
3. Determine the deductibility of investment interest, prepaid interest, points, and prepayment penalties noting the offset of passive income with rental property mortgage interest.
4. Identify business vehicle operating costs using (or switching between) the actual cost method or the standard mileage rate, recognize the importance of expense and mileage records, and specify depreciation traps when purchasing a vehicle.
5. Recall the requirements for business expenses to meet the directly related test, cite the elements of the associated test, identify the business expense statutory exceptions, and recognize the application of R.R. 90-23 and R.R. 99-7 to the deduction of transportation costs to a temporary work location.
6. Determine business asset depreciation using both ACRS and MACRS recovery classes, identify sources of §172 net operating losses (NOLs) noting carryback and carryover rules, specify tax breaks for nonitemizing taxpayers, recognize the advisability of filing an amended return, determine how to avoid audits by claiming refunds for provable items noting which return amendments are safest.

Chapter 6: Income Splitting

1. Recognize formats for income splitting, determine the tax treatment of employee and self-employed business expenses particularly home-office expenses noting the two non-exclusive use exceptions and the income limitation, cite changes made to home office deduction under TRA '97, and recognize the ability of self-employed to make annual deductible contributions to a Keogh plan.
2. Identify the tax opportunities available to an unincorporated business including retirement plans, the hiring of family members, travel expenses, casualty losses, bad debts, and self-employment tax.

3. Determine the uses and tax characteristics of regular and S corporations by:
 - a. Citing circumstances when incorporation is desirable,
 - b. Recognizing the taxation of these entities including their ability to split income; and
 - c. Specifying initial §351 formation and capitalization issues and identifying appropriate tax form filings for each entity.
4. Recognize the use of partnerships to split income among partners including the use of §704(e) family partnerships and the consequences of gifting a partnership interest to a child or to another family member.
5. Identify the use of a custodianship to split income and contain the “kiddie tax” noting initial planning considerations and good investments for children, recognize deductions and credits for childcare, education, children, and §7872 loans, and specify the income and later estate tax benefits of gifts.

Chapter 7: Elimination

1. Identify tax elimination techniques by:
 - a. Recognizing the current §121 home sale exclusion noting its differences with prior tax law;
 - b. Determining qualifications for tax-free state or local obligations including private activity bonds; and
 - c. Specifying the tax elimination aspects of family transactions such as gifts, bequests, inheritances, life insurance, and even divorce.
2. Recognize employer deductions as a means to increase tax-free incentive-based compensation for employees by:
 - a. Specifying rules for excluding fringe benefits under §132 and their proper reporting on the W-2; and
 - b. Identifying popular employee fringe benefits including employer paid accident & health coverage, meals or lodging, cafeteria plan benefits, §127 education assistance, achievement awards, group life insurance and dependent care assistance.
3. Determine how to value fringe benefits according to IRS regulations, identify how to comply with ERISA requirements, specify the proper reporting of reimbursed and unreimbursed business expenses under accountable and nonaccountable plans, determine the substantiation of auto expenses using a fixed and variable rate, and specify eligible retirement benefits exempt from social security taxes.

Chapter 8: Estate Planning

1. Identify estate planning for business clients by:

- a. Selecting elements of estate tax planning that have remained unchanged by recent legislation;
 - b. Recognizing the unlimited marital deduction and its effect on the gross estate of the value of property; and
 - c. Specifying the applicable exclusion amounts for various years of death.
2. Determine the differences between “stepped-up basis” and repealed “modified carryover basis” for estate tax purposes.
3. Specify estate-planning goals and the benefits and drawbacks of the primary dispositive plans.
4. Identify the various types of trusts, specify family documents that every taxpayer should consider, and determine the advantages and disadvantages of the former private annuity format.