

PMP Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

180 Scored questions	4h Time limit	Pass/Fail (proficiency-ba... Passing score
\$675 Exam fee	Project Management Inst... Governing body	

A fast-reference guide to the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification, administered by the Project Management Institute (PMI).

Exam Logistics At-a-Glance

Item	Detail
Governing body	Project Management Institute (PMI)
Question count	180 questions
Scored vs. pretest	170 scored, 10 unscored pretest questions
Duration	240 minutes
Breaks	Two 10-minute breaks
Fee (non-member)	675 USD
Delivery	Pearson VUE test center or OnVUE online proctored
Passing score	No published numeric cut score; proficiency-based, reported per domain
Domains	3 domains
Renewal	60 PDUs every 3 years

Eligibility Snapshot

- 35 hours of project management training/education required before applying.
- 36 months (3 years) or 60 months (5 years) of experience leading projects, depending on your education level (degree vs. no degree).
- Experience must fall within the last 10 years.
- Eligibility review can take up to 24 hours to process before you can schedule a seat.

Content Domains (Exam Content Outline)

1. Domain I — People: 33% of exam items. Leadership, team building, conflict resolution, servant leadership, stakeholder engagement, and emotional intelligence.
2. Domain II — Process: 41% of exam items. The largest domain — technical project management: scope, schedule, cost, risk, quality, procurement, and integration mechanics.
3. Domain III — Business Environment: 26% of exam items. Organizational strategy, compliance, benefits realization, and connecting project outcomes to business value.

Predictive vs. Agile/Hybrid Split

- Approximately 40% of exam items represent predictive (waterfall-style) project management approaches.
- The remaining 60% of items are split between adaptive/agile and hybrid approaches — expect Scrum, Kanban, and iterative-delivery scenarios woven throughout, not siloed into one section.
- Do not assume the exam is "mostly traditional PM" — agile and hybrid thinking is tested across all three domains, not as a separate block.

Key Terms and Concepts to Memorize

- Servant leadership — the PMP's preferred leadership style: remove blockers, empower the team, don't command-and-control.
- Progressive elaboration — refining plans as more detail becomes available, common to both predictive and agile mindsets.
- Earned value management (EVM) — SV, CV, SPI, CPI: know the formulas and what a value above/below 1.0 or 0 means.
- Critical path — the longest sequence of dependent tasks; float/slack calculations are a recurring question pattern.
- Risk register / risk appetite / risk threshold — distinguish qualitative vs. quantitative risk analysis and the standard risk responses (avoid, mitigate, transfer, accept; exploit, enhance, share for positive risks).
- Stakeholder register and power/interest grid — tools for planning engagement strategy.
- Retrospective vs. lessons learned — agile teams inspect-and-adapt every iteration; predictive projects typically capture lessons at phase/project close.
- Definition of Done / Definition of Ready — agile acceptance criteria concepts.
- Change control board (CCB) — formal mechanism for approving scope/baseline changes in predictive environments.

Common Gotchas and Traps

- PMI favors the answer that empowers the team and addresses root cause — avoid options where the project manager unilaterally overrides or escalates prematurely.
- "Most correct" answer questions often have several technically true options; pick the one that follows PMI's process order (e.g., consult the plan/register before improvising).
- Do not default to predictive-only thinking — many scenario questions expect an agile or hybrid response even when not explicitly labeled "agile."
- EVM questions frequently disguise which value is being asked for (SV vs. CV, SPI vs. CPI) — read the question twice before calculating.
- "Gold plating" (adding unrequested scope) is always the wrong choice, even when framed as going above and beyond for the customer.
- Escalating to a sponsor or client is usually a later step, not a first response, when a team-level solution is available.
- Remember the two scheduled breaks are built into the 240-minute session — plan pacing around them rather than assuming continuous time.

Night-Before Checklist

- Confirm your Pearson VUE appointment time, location (or OnVUE system check if testing online), and required ID.
- Re-skim the domain weightings so pacing priorities are fresh: Process is the heaviest domain, People second, Business Environment third.
- Review your EVM formulas and critical-path/float calculation steps one final time.
- Skim your notes on servant leadership behaviors and conflict-resolution approaches — these show up disproportionately in scenario questions.
- If testing online, clear your desk and room per OnVUE proctoring rules and test your webcam/mic ahead of time.
- Plan to use the two built-in breaks deliberately rather than pushing through fatigue.
- Get sleep — recognition-based judgment on ambiguous scenario questions degrades quickly with fatigue.

- Remind yourself the exam reports performance per domain (Above Target/Target/Below Target/Needs Improvement), not a single percentage — don't panic-chase a numeric score that doesn't exist.

Official sources

- PMI — PMP Examination Content Outline – July 2026:
<https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/certifications/new-pmp-examination-content-outline-2026.pdf>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025 — Project Management Specialists (SOC 13-1082): <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes131082.htm>
- PMI — PMP Certification Exam Information (Exam Content Outline – July 2026):
<https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/certifications/new-pmp-examination-content-outline-2026.pdf?rev=fbed2ec0b3e54a568f34655382321de8>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/technology/pmp