

# The Complete PMP® Certification Guide

Are you interested in earning your Project Management Professional (PMP)® certification, but you're unsure how to start the process? While this is a big step for your career, it doesn't have to be a complex one. This is the ultimate guide on PMP certification and it can be your roadmap for navigating this process. Explore some common questions you might have about PMP certification, and learn what steps you need to take to become a PMP credential holder.

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## HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM READY TO GET MY PMP CERTIFICATION?

Before you sign up for your PMP exam, there are a few prerequisites you have to complete. There are two paths to meeting the initial qualifications. You must have either:

- **A four-year college degree** (bachelor's degree or global equivalent), three years of project management experience, and 4,500 hours of on-the-job experience
- **A secondary degree** (high school or associate degree), five years of project management experience, and 7,500 hours of on-the-job experience

In addition to [meeting these requirements](#), all applicants must have at least 35 contact hours of accredited or formal project management education.

If you meet the criteria listed above, you're eligible to take the PMP exam.



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## HOW DO I EARN 35 HOURS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

Earning your project management education hours is a requirement of the certification application process. These exam prep courses ensure you're up to speed on the most current project management strategies, as well as give you the knowledge you need to pass the exam.

It's imperative you choose an exam prep course provider who not only prepares you to pass the PMP exam, but also prepares you for your future as a certified project manager. Here is the criteria you should use when evaluating exam prep providers to partner with:

### Experience

The PMP exam requires more from its participants than having a surface-level knowledge of project management. Instead, you need a comprehensive understanding of the profession. To gain this understanding, you need access to the best PMP certification training resources. Evaluate the different exam prep companies you're considering to determine which ones feature these best resources, including years of experience helping project managers pass their certification exams.

One important aspect to consider is whether or not the exam prep courses provided have been reviewed and approved by the Project Management Institute (PMI). PMI has a Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.) program for exam prep providers. As a PMI R.E.P., companies must agree to abide by PMI established quality assurance criteria. Choosing a R.E.P. course provider can eliminate some of the stress in your certification journey.

## Course Materials

Course materials will be your greatest resource during the PMP exam prep process. Your study approach should go beyond a simple booklet, and should be as thorough as possible. Look for a PMP exam prep provider that offers as many of the [following course materials](#) as possible:

- PMP Exam Prep Coursebook
- A PMP Exam Strategy Guide
- *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) - Sixth Edition*
- PMP Exam Quick Study Guide
- PMI Process Map & Key Formulas
- PMI Primary ITTOs
- Mock Exam
- Sample Forms
- PMP Exam Prep Book of Exercises
- Video-on-Demand Lectures
- Practice Questions
- Exam Prep Tutoring

Each of these materials will play a role in not only preparing you for your the exam, but enabling you to successfully pass it.

## Completion Certificate

A certificate of completion proves you satisfied the requirements of the course and now possess the 35 hours of project management education required to apply to take the exam.

In the event that you're audited (a scenario which is explored below), you must be able to prove that you met the education requirements outlined by PMI.

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## HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT PMP EXAM PREP COURSE?

Now that you know what requirements you must meet to be able to sit for the PMP certification exam, you need to **choose the right exam prep course to get ready**. Every person is different, so it's important to keep your own learning style in mind as you evaluate courses. You have a few different course options, including:

**Live, In-Person Course** – With in-person PMP certification training, you attend exam prep sessions in a classroom setting at a specified time. You'll receive printed versions of the training materials, and it's likely you'll also have access to online training materials you can reference later. These courses closely align with the needs of a traditional classroom learner, where lessons and discussions are led by an instructor.

**Virtual Course** – If you need a more flexible training option, you can prepare for the exam entirely online. Virtual training sessions still feature live instruction with a training professional, and you have access to all the same materials as you would in a classroom setting. The only difference is that they are offered online. You can complete all the essential training from the comfort of your own office or home.

**In-House Training** – Many companies choose to offer in-house training for their aspiring PMP certification holders. In these courses, certified instructors come to your company and hold in-person training sessions. This is a great solution if companies have multiple employees who want to pursue the PMP certification.

Beware of free PMP certification training providers as they often have lower pass rates and less qualified instructors. Before choosing your course provider, look at PMP certification training reviews or PMP boot camp reviews online. These reviews give insight into both the nature of the courses offered and the success rate of the participants. **When it comes to PMP certification training, one size doesn't fit all.** So, be sure to choose the course option that best suits your schedule and your learning style.

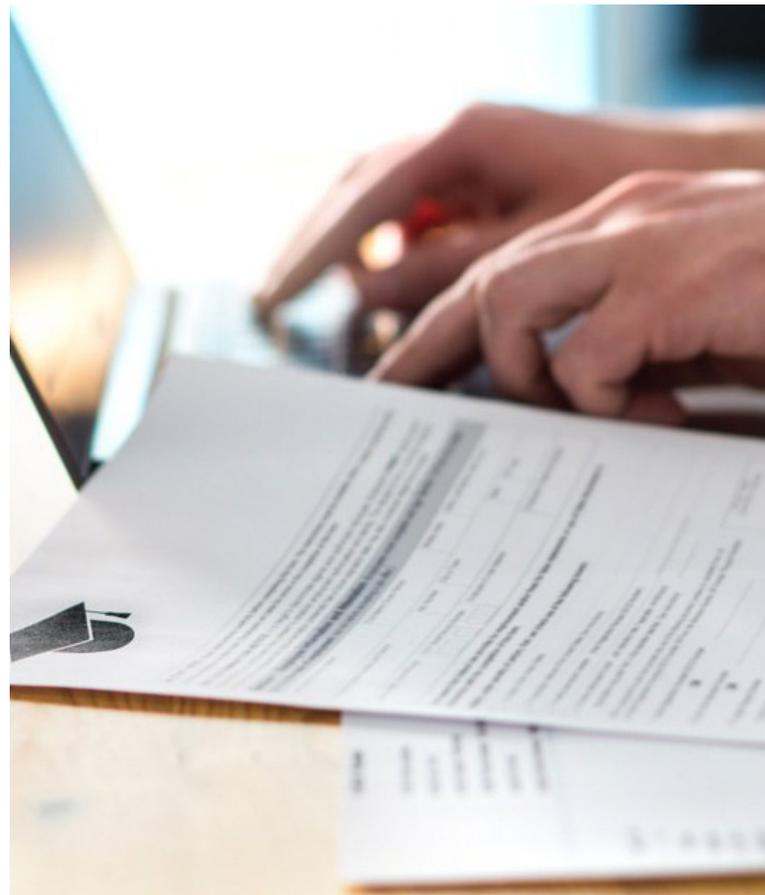
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## AM I READY TO APPLY FOR THE PMP EXAM?

If you've satisfied the prerequisites, then yes; you're eligible for the PMP certification exam!

Now, it's time to begin the application process. The first step is to [create an account on Project Management Institute's website](#). It's important to note that once you start your application, you are unable to cancel it. You have 90 days to complete your application once you begin, although the process typically only takes about five days.

Your application to take the exam can be completed online or submitted on paper and sent to PMI. Once your application detailing how you meet the exam requirements has been approved, you have one year to take the PMP certification exam.



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## HOW MUCH DOES THE PMP CERTIFICATION EXAM COST?

The PMP certification exam is both a time and a monetary investment. However, a small investment now will greatly benefit you in the long run. One way to cut the costs associated with the exam is to pay for a PMI membership, which is \$139 annually and entitles you to testing discounts. The costs for the PMP certification exam are listed below:

### First Exam Attempt

- Member Price: \$405
- Non-member Price: \$555

### Reexamination

- Member Price: \$275
- Non-member Price: \$375

### Continuing Certification Renewal\*

- Member Price: \$60
- Non-member Price: \$150

\* See *Continuing Certification Requirements* section for more information.

If you're concerned about the cost of the testing and exam prep, you could talk to your employer about covering the cost. PMP certification is a great investment for employers, as PMP certification holders are equipped to effectively manage projects to be completed in time and on budget.



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## WHAT IF I AM AUDITED?

While dealing with an application audit is one of the lesser known outcomes of this process, it's a real possibility for some exam candidates. PMI has the right to audit any candidate at random to ensure that they actually meet the exam requirements as reported. In fact, you can even be audited by PMI after you have received your certification. And, if you fail to meet audit requirements, you will not receive a refund for your exam costs.

So, how does the audit process work? If you're selected for an audit, PMI will alert you via email with directions on how to submit your materials, including the following documentation:

**Copies of your diploma or  
global equivalent**

**Signatures from your  
supervisor(s) verifying your  
project management hours**

**Copies of certificates  
and/or letters from the  
training institute(s)  
for the 35 hours of pm  
education recorded on  
your application**

Once you receive an audit notification, you have 90 days to submit the materials. After your documentation is submitted, it should take about five to seven business days for PMI to review your audit.



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## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW BEFORE TAKING THE PMP EXAM?

You've finally made it to exam day! Before you sit for the actual PMP certification exam, you need to know a few things, the first of which is how the test is scored. There are five scoring categories, each carrying a different percentage of your total score. The percentage breakdown looks like this:

Executing – 31%	Initiating – 13%
Planning – 24%	Closing – 7%
Monitoring and Controlling – 25%	

You also need to be prepared for the length of the test. You have **four hours** to answer:

175 scored multiple-choice questions

25 pre-test unscored multiple-choice questions

Fortunately, once the test is completed, you'll find out whether you passed or failed instantly. There's no long waiting period to see how you did. If you pass, this also means that you can capitalize on the PMP certification immediately. Put it on your resume, because you're now officially a PMP credential holder. Congratulations!



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## HOW DO I MAINTAIN MY PMP CREDENTIAL?

Passing the PMP certification exam isn't the end of your journey; it's just the beginning. Earning the PMP certification isn't a one-time action. You must take regular steps to maintain your credential. While this may seem like a hassle, it's actually in your best interest to maintain the certification. Ongoing education ensures that you're always current on the best project management strategies, and you're staying up-to-date on industry trends.

The PMI Continuing Certification Requirements (CCR) program helps project managers to continue their learning and better hone their skills. You can also focus on areas that need improvement, so you're proficient in all essential project management skills. And, since recording your professional development activities is part of the CCR process, you have an incentive to actually keep learning.

**So, how do you maintain your PMP credential?** Let's look at the requirements for renewing the PMP certification.

## CCR Requirements

Here's where Professional Development Units (PDUs) come back into play. Every three years, you must show that you have earned 60 additional PDUs to maintain your credentials. You must continue to pursue PDUs through a couple of different avenues:

- **Education** – You must engage in learning opportunities focused on the PMI Talent Triangle®.
- **Giving Back to the Profession** – You must use your knowledge and skills to contribute to and build the project management profession.

As part of your 60 PDUs, you must earn a minimum of 35 educational PDUs, and you must give back a maximum of 25 PDUs to your profession.

## Understanding PDUs

Before you can [start earning PDUs](#), you have to understand exactly what they are. PDUs measure approved professional learning and development activities, and they cover areas outlined in the [PMI Talent Triangle](#)®: technical project management, leadership, strategic and business management. These three areas are viewed as the core pillars of effective project management.

One PDU is equivalent to one hour spent engaging in project management activities that fall into one of these three categories. So, to earn 30 PDUs, you would need to engage in 30 hours of education on one of these topics.



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## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT NOW THAT I'M CERTIFIED?

Once you're a PMP credential holder, all of your hard work pays off. You can [expect to earn 20% more than your peers without certification](#), and you'll likely experience greater job security. According to PMI, [the median base salary for those who have worked in project management](#) for five up to ten years was \$97,000. That salary is about \$16,000 less than PMP credential holders with the same amount of experience.

[Earning the PMP certification](#) is a huge accomplishment you should take pride in; [you're now among the best in the project management profession!](#)

Contact us for more information about our training programs, partner program or in-house training

Contact Us

