

Tips for Passing the PMP Exam the First Time

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Are you worried you might fail the exam? It is natural to be worried, but here is something that may help increase your confidence: RMC has spent years counseling people who have failed the exam, and in this book, we have addressed all the reasons they failed. This chapter serves as a review of some of the key things you need to understand as you prepare for the exam. Take this opportunity to find any remaining gaps in your knowledge so you are prepared to pass the exam on your first try.

Putting It All Together

Many people preparing for the exam study each topic individually and never put it all together. Rita's Process Chart™ is one trick designed to help you connect the concepts in this book. If you worked through the exercises in chapter 3, you should understand the overall project management process, including all the efforts involved in it. If you skimmed over these exercises, go back and spend time on them. In this chapter, we provide some additional information and exercises to help you put all the concepts together.

Certain themes appear throughout the *PMBOK® Guide*. There are also some terms that are repeated throughout most of the knowledge areas. We covered many of these in chapter 2. These are not necessarily the most important topics to know, but understanding them will help you see how each concept relates to the overall project management process. And because these concepts appear so often in the *PMBOK® Guide*, they may also frequently appear on the exam. Hopefully you also use them regularly as you manage projects in the real world.

Over the next several pages, we discuss some of the frequently occurring terms you need to understand for the exam.

Organizational Process Assets How many times have you seen the term "organizational process assets" in this book? Do you understand what it really means? Organizational process assets are an organization's existing processes, procedures, and historical data that influence the way a project is managed. With this definition in mind, can you see why organizational process assets are inputs to many of the individual project management processes from initiating to closing?

Remember that "organizational process assets" is a PMI-ism, and they can be considered inputs to most processes even when they are not specifically listed in this book or in the *PMBOK® Guide*. Similarly, updates to the historical databases are outputs of many processes. These updates can provide valuable records, lessons learned, and other information for future projects.

Enterprise Environmental Factors Enterprise environmental factors are also frequent inputs to project management processes. Think of enterprise environmental factors as a company's culture and existing systems that the project will have to deal with or can make use of. Enterprise environmental factors are outside the control of the team and may originate from within the organization or from external sources. Enterprise environmental factors could include the culture, mission, and values of the organization, as well as governance factors external to the organization.

Remember that "enterprise environmental factors" is a PMI-ism. Like organizational process assets, enterprise environmental factors can be considered inputs even when they are not specifically listed in this book or in the *PMBOK® Guide*. Updates to enterprise environmental factors are outputs of many processes as well—providing valuable historical data regarding the company's culture or systems for the benefit of future projects.

Management Plans for Each Knowledge Area Planning is a key step in addressing the knowledge areas of scope, schedule, cost, quality, resource, communications, risk, procurement, and stakeholder management. Creating a management plan for each of these knowledge areas, plus plans for change, configuration, and requirements, is a crucial part of a project manager's job. These plans become part of the project management plan. They are vital tools that empower team members to take responsibility for their actions, work, and participation. In creating these plans, the project manager proactively thinks through not just how the project should be planned, but also how the work of executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing should be carried out. These plans provide direction for the project manager and team. And because the plans will address the majority of questions and concerns that might come up, they allow the project manager and team to spend more of their time completing the work of the project and less time dealing with problems. Unless stated otherwise, assume on the exam that the project manager has created a management plan for each knowledge area.

Project Management Plan The project management plan is described in the Integration Management chapter and discussed throughout this book. This plan contains the blueprint for the project. It is an input to many planning, executing, and monitoring and controlling processes, as well as the Close Project or Phase process. Work is compared against the plan to ensure that the correct work is being accomplished. Because the plan is the blueprint for the project, it is maintained throughout the project, and it is updated when there are changes. Therefore, project management plan updates are an output of most of the executing and monitoring and controlling processes, as well as some planning processes. (See the "Project Management Plan Updates and Project Documents Updates" section later in this chapter for more on this topic).

Baselines Baselines help the project manager control the project. This is an important concept for the exam. The knowledge areas of scope, schedule, and cost have baselines, which combine to create the performance measurement baseline for the project. How well the project is performing in terms of scope, schedule, and cost is determined by comparing performance measurements against these baselines. Change requests that affect the baselines must be approved in the Perform Integrated Change Control process before the baselines can be changed.

Work Performance Data, Information, and Reports The terms work performance data, work performance information, and work performance reports differentiate the various stages of project data and information. Work performance data is made up of the initial measurements and details gathered during project work (executing). When work performance data has been analyzed for conformance to the project management plan during the controlling processes, it becomes work performance

information. This information can then be organized into work performance reports, which are distributed to the various stakeholders who need to receive and possibly act on the information.

Expert Judgment Expert judgment, a frequently used tool of project management, refers to the knowledge and experience of someone who has done the types of things necessary to complete the work for the project. Although it is not often discussed in this book, expert judgment is used throughout the project in every process group, including every integration management process. Expert judgment is particularly valuable in planning a project and is a tool and technique for most of the individual planning processes.

Project Management Plan Updates and Project Documents Updates

Updates to the project management plan and project documents are frequent outputs of the project management processes across planning, executing, and monitoring and controlling. Updates to the project management plan may include updates to any of the plan's components.

Project documentation is updated to reflect adjustments, actions, and changes. In planning, updates include iterations of the plan and knowledge gained as planning processes are followed. In executing and monitoring and controlling, project documents are updated with work performance data and information. These updates ensure everyone has a common understanding of the project as it progresses. They also allow the project manager to reliably use documentation to measure and control the project.

Project documents, including the requirements traceability matrix, stakeholder register, activity list, quality checklists, risk register, change log, resource calendars, and issue log, are updated throughout the project.

Change Requests Change requests include recommended corrective and preventive actions and defect repair. They are outputs of some planning processes, most of the executing processes, and all the monitoring and controlling processes except Perform Integrated Change Control. Change requests are inputs to Perform Integrated Change Control, where they are reviewed. The approved change requests (outputs of Perform Integrated Change Control) are inputs to Direct and Manage Project Work and Control Procurements, where the changes are implemented. In Control Quality, the approved changes are verified to make sure that they return the intended results.

Understanding Inputs and Outputs What about other inputs and outputs? Many people who have not had good project management training stress over memorizing the inputs and outputs.

First, let's review the definitions of inputs and outputs.

An input means:

"What do I need before I can..."

An output means:

"What will I have when I am done with..."

Or,

"What am I trying to achieve when I am doing..."

Do you realize how many inputs and outputs there are, and how much time you could spend focusing on memorization? Since the exam will test your ability to apply knowledge, such memorization would waste your valuable time, and it will not benefit you in the real world. If you know Rita's Process Chart™ and understand project management and the actions that occur in each of the knowledge area processes, you

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can use logic to identify most of the key inputs and outputs that appear on the exam, rather than relying on memorization. For example, if you know what a WBS is, you should understand that you need information about scope and requirements to create the WBS. Therefore, the project scope statement and requirements documentation are key inputs. If you understand the integrated change control process, you should know that it results in changes to project documents and components of the project management plan affected by approved changes.

The following exercises will give you some additional help with inputs and outputs.

Exercise The following are some of the project management processes for which you should know the inputs and outputs. Use logic and your understanding of the process to complete the following. Enter the inputs and outputs for each process, including any real-world inputs and outputs that you can think of that are not in the *PMBOK® Guide*. When you are finished, check your answers with the *PMBOK® Guide* and the rest of this book.

Project Management Process	Key Inputs	Key Outputs
Close Project or Phase		
Sequence Activities		
Develop Project Management Plan		
Plan Procurement Management		
Collect Requirements		

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Project Management Process	Key Inputs	Key Outputs
Define Activities		
Estimate Activity Resources		
Direct and Manage Project Work		
Define Scope		
Identify Stakeholders		
Develop Schedule		
Validate Scope		
Monitor Risks		

Project Management Process	Key Inputs	Key Outputs
Manage Stakeholder Engagement		
Conduct Procurements		

If you found this exercise helpful, you may want to continue to test yourself on other processes not listed here.

Exercise Here is another way to get more familiar with the project management processes. For each process listed, fill in the appropriate information in the columns that follow. Note that the last two columns are asking which process comes before or after *within* the knowledge area.

Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Define Activities					
Plan Procurement Management					
Monitor and Control Project Work					

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Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Sequence Activities					
Collect Requirements					
Direct and Manage Project Work					
Develop Project Management Plan					
Develop Schedule					
Validate Scope					
Perform Qualitative Risk Analysis					
Identify Stakeholders					

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Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Conduct Procurements			Define Scope		
Perform Integrated Change Control					

Answer The answers to this exercise provide the essence of the actions required, but note that you could add the words “Whatever needs to be done as part of” to the start of each answer in the “What Does It Include?” column. These descriptions are meant to hint at all the soft, interpersonal skills activity required, as well as the project management and technical activity needed.

Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Define Activities	Schedule management	Planning	Creating an activity list from each work package	Plan Schedule Management	Sequence Activities
Plan Procurement Management	Procurement management	Planning	Creating the procurement statements of work, bid documents, and the procurement management plan	None	Conduct Procurements
Monitor and Control Project Work	Integration management	Monitoring and controlling	Measuring and analyzing performance against the project management plan and baselines	Manage Project Knowledge	Perform Integrated Change Control

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Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Sequence Activities	Schedule management	Planning	Creating a network diagram	Define Activities	Estimate Activity Durations
Collect Requirements	Scope management	Planning	Documenting detailed requirements and creating the requirements traceability matrix	Plan Scope Management	Define Scope
Direct and Manage Project Work	Integration management	Executing	Facilitating and producing work according to the project management plan	Develop Project Management Plan	Manage Project Knowledge
Develop Project Management Plan	Integration management	Planning	Integrating all the individual management plans and baselines, and creating a project management plan that is bought into, approved, realistic, and formal	Develop Project Charter	Direct and Manage Project Work
Develop Schedule	Schedule management	Planning	Creating a bought into, approved, realistic, and formal schedule and schedule baseline	Estimate Activity Durations	Control Schedule
Validate Scope	Scope management	Monitoring and controlling	Meeting with the customer to gain formal acceptance of interim deliverables	Create WBS	Control Scope
Perform Qualitative Risk Analysis	Risk management	Planning	Analyzing the probability and impact of potential risks to determine which risks might warrant a response or further analysis	Identify Risks	Perform Quantitative Risk Analysis (don't forget, however, that some projects, or individual project risks, may skip this process and go straight to Plan Risk Responses)

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Project Management Process	Knowledge Area	Process Group	What Does It Include?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes Before?	What Knowledge Area Process Comes After?
Identify Stakeholders	Stakeholder management	Initiating	Identifying, documenting, and analyzing information about stakeholders on the project	None	Plan Stakeholder Engagement
Conduct Procurements	Procurement management	Executing	Selecting a seller and obtaining a signed contract	Plan Procurement Management	Control Procurements
Define Scope	Scope management	Planning	Creating the project scope statement	Collect Requirements	Create WBS
Perform Integrated Change Control	Integration management	Monitoring and controlling	Evaluating the impact of requested changes to the project and approving or rejecting change requests	Monitor and Control Project Work	Close Project or Phase

If you found this exercise helpful, you may want to continue to test yourself on other processes not listed here, and review your answers against the process descriptions in this book.



Formulas to Know for the Exam

Although we do not suggest you memorize a lot of information to prepare for the exam, the following formulas are ones you do need to memorize, as well as understand. The exam will not include a lot of questions involving formulas, but knowing these formulas will enable you to apply them at a moment's notice. If you are not comfortable with math, you will be happy to hear that you can know none of these formulas and still pass the exam! The most important formulas are those relating to earned value because earned value is a key component of monitoring and controlling.

Formulas to Know for the Exam

Name	Formula	PMP® Exam Prep Chapter Reference
Present value (PV)	$\frac{FV}{(1 + r)^n}$	Integration Management
Expected activity duration (triangular distribution)*	$\frac{P + M + O}{3}$	Schedule Management
Expected activity duration (beta distribution)*	$\frac{P + 4M + O}{6}$	Schedule Management
Total float	LS – ES or LF – EF	Schedule Management
Cost variance (CV)	EV – AC	Cost Management
Schedule variance (SV)	EV – PV	Cost Management
Cost performance index (CPI)	$\frac{EV}{AC}$	Cost Management
Schedule performance index (SPI)	$\frac{EV}{PV}$	Cost Management
Estimate at completion (EAC)	AC + Bottom-up ETC	Cost Management
Estimate at completion (EAC)	$\frac{BAC}{CPI^c}$	Cost Management
Estimate at completion (EAC)	AC + (BAC – EV)	Cost Management
Estimate at completion (EAC)	$AC + \frac{(BAC - EV)}{(CPI^c \times SPI^c)}$	Cost Management
To-complete performance index (TCPI)	$\frac{(BAC - EV)}{(BAC - AC)}$	Cost Management
Estimate to complete (ETC)	EAC – AC	Cost Management
Variance at completion (VAC)	BAC – EAC	Cost Management
Communication channels	$\frac{n(n - 1)}{2}$	Communications Management
Expected monetary value (EMV—Cost)	P × I	Risk Management
Expected value (EV—Schedule)	P × I	Risk Management

*Remember that these formulas can be used for costs as well as activity durations.

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In the Cost Management chapter, we also highlighted some reverse formulas to help you calculate earned value (EV). With so many other formulas listed here, you may not want to memorize these (particularly if you understand the process for reversing the formulas), but they can be useful. They are $EV = CV + AC$, $EV = SV + PV$, $EV = CPI \times AC$, and $EV = SPI \times PV$.

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Before You Take the Exam

If you purchased this book directly from RMC, you should have received tips about how to use the PMBOK® Guide along with this book to help you prepare for the exam.

Many people fail the exam because they did not properly prepare. You can avoid that mistake. Read the following tips slowly, and honestly assess how each item applies to you:

- Know the material thoroughly, but do not approach the exam assuming it simply tests facts that you must memorize. The exam tests knowledge, application, and analysis. You must understand how to use all concepts and processes in the real world, including how they work in combination with each other in the context of a large project.
- Have real-world experience using major project management tools and techniques. If you do not have this experience now, try to get it. If you cannot get this experience before you take the exam, make sure you can visualize how tools and processes would be used on real projects. This visualization will help you understand the benefits of using project management tools and techniques in the real world, and help you prepare for situational questions on the exam.
- As noted throughout this book, make sure you are thinking in terms of large, plan-driven projects when studying for and taking the actual exam. This will help you remember the importance of processes, tools, and techniques that you may not be using in your real-world project management.
- Understand the areas that PMI emphasizes (PMI-isms, explained in chapter 1 and throughout this book).
- Be familiar with the types of questions you can expect on the exam, but do not be alarmed if you see new types of questions when you take the exam.
- Be prepared to see situations on the exam that may be ambiguous and wordy—requiring you to read multiple paragraphs. Practice interpreting these types of questions using the practice exams or PM FASTrack® if you have it.
- If you have PM FASTrack®, practice using analysis to select the best answer from what appears to be two or more “right” answers. (See the next section for more information.)
- Decide in advance what notes you will write down at the beginning of your exam. This may include formulas or gaps in your project management knowledge. Practice creating this “download sheet” before taking the exam. (See the next section for more information.)
- Deal with stress before you take the exam. If you are a nervous test taker, using PM FASTrack® can give you an opportunity to practice stress control.
- Plan and use a strategy for taking the exam. This may mean you will take a five- to ten-minute break after every 50 questions, or that you will answer all exam questions as quickly as possible and then take a break before you review, and potentially adjust, your answers.
- Expect that there will be questions you cannot answer or even understand. This happens to everyone. Be prepared so you do not get anxious or doubt your abilities during the exam.
- Visit the exam site before your exam date to determine how long it will take to get there, see what the testing room looks like, and learn how you will access any food or beverages that you may bring to the testing center. This is particularly helpful if you are a nervous test taker.

- Do not expect the exam site to be quiet. A student from one of RMC's PMP® Exam Prep courses had to deal with a band playing outside the testing center for three hours. Others have had someone taking an exam that required intensive typing, and thus more noise, right next to them. Many testing sites will have earplugs or headphones available. If you have PM FASTrack®, practice answering questions in an environment that is not 100 percent quiet.
- Do not overstudy. Getting completely comfortable with all the material in this book is just not possible. It is not worth studying for hundreds of hours. It is a waste of time and will not guarantee you'll pass the exam.
- Do not study the night before you're scheduled to take the exam. Instead, do something relaxing and get extra sleep. You want to be fresh and well rested.

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Tricks for Taking and Passing the PMP Exam

This book has presented what you should do and know before you take the exam. Now, let's prepare you for the big day. The following are some tips for taking—and passing—the exam.

1. You must bring your authorization (email or letter) from PMI to the test site, as well as two forms of ID with exactly the same name you entered on the exam application.
2. Make sure you are comfortable during the exam. Wear layered clothing so you can remove outer layers if you become too warm. (Note, however, that some testing centers may require you to store any layers of clothing removed during the exam outside the exam room.)
3. Bring something to eat and drink in case you need either during the exam. You will not be able to take food or beverages into the exam room, but you will be able to access your things outside the exam room. You do not want to be distracted by being hungry.
4. You will be given paper and pencils to make notes during the exam. The type, size, and amount of paper varies based on each testing center. Some locations may instead provide a marker and erasable board or laminated paper. Note that the testing center will require you to exchange your used paper if you need more during the exam.
5. After you start your exam, consider taking no more than five to seven minutes of your test time to create your "download sheet," which is where you write down anything you have trouble remembering. It will free up your mind to handle exam questions once the information you are most concerned about is written down.
6. After you are shown to your assigned space in the testing center, you'll typically have two computer tutorials (general testing center and PMP test-specific) to complete prior to the start of the exam. This will help you become familiar with the computer-based test functionality. You need to start and complete those tutorials within their allotted time. Then you can start your four-hour exam.
7. You will have access to a calculator during the exam. With computer-based testing, the computer will have a calculator function and the tutorial will show you how to use it, or you may be given a physical calculator. Contact the testing center ahead of time if you have a question about this.
8. The exam does not adapt to your answers. This means 200 questions are selected when your exam starts, and those 200 questions will not change.
9. Use deep-breathing techniques to help you relax and focus. This is particularly helpful if you are very nervous before or during the exam and when you notice yourself reading the same question two or three times. Breathing techniques can be as simple as breathing deeply five times, to provide more oxygen to your brain.
10. Smile when taking the exam. This may sound hard to do when you are stressed and taking an exam for four hours, but studies show that smiling relieves stress and makes you feel more confident.

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11. Use all the exam time. Do not submit your exam early unless you have reviewed every question you skipped or marked for review.
12. Everyone has their own unique test-taking quirks and style. If you have PM FASTrack®, pay attention to your quirks while you work through the exam simulations. You may have to create a plan to ensure your style will not negatively impact you while taking the exam.
13. Control the exam; do not let it control you. How would you feel if you read the first question and didn't know the answer? And then the same thing happened after you read the second and third questions as well? This can happen because you are just not ready to answer questions and your level of stress is not allowing you to think. So what do you do? If you do not immediately know the answer to a question, leave it blank, or use the Mark for Review function and come back to it later.
14. Control frustration, and maintain focus on each question. You might dislike or disagree with some of the questions on this exam. You might also be surprised at how many questions you mark for review. Make sure you stay focused on the current question. If you are still thinking about question 20 when you reach question 120, there will have been 100 questions that you have not looked at closely enough.
15. Answer each question using your knowledge of project management good practices, not the perspective you have acquired from your real-world or life experiences. Many people who failed the exam tried to answer questions from their real-world experience. Since these people did not use good practices of project management on their projects, they got many questions wrong on the exam. If approaching it from the perspective of project management good practices does not give you an answer, rely on your training. If this still does not help you answer the question, only then should you rely on your real-world experience.
16. Computer-based testing allows you to highlight information that you think is relevant to answering the question and strike through things that are distractors, or less important, to solving the problem or situation. If you use these features as you read the situation and the answers, you are more likely to have to read a question only once.
17. First, identify the actual question in the words provided (it is often the last sentence), and then read the rest of the text. Note the topics discussed in the question and in the descriptors. This should help you understand what the question is asking and reduce the need to reread questions.
18. Carefully consider each answer choice listed, and choose the best one of the choices given. Don't read into the answers.
19. One common reason people answer questions incorrectly is they do not read all four answer choices. Do not make this mistake. Make sure you read the question and all four choices. This will help you select the best answer. If you find yourself forgetting to read all answer options, start reading the choices backwards (choice D first, then C, etc.).
20. There may be more than one "correct" answer to each question, but only one "best" answer. Make sure you are looking for the best answer.
21. Be alert to the fact that the answer to one question is sometimes given away in another question. Write down things you do not understand as you take the exam (also note the question number so you can easily go back to it). Use any extra time at the end of the exam to go back to these questions.
22. Almost all the answer choices will be the same length for each question. Therefore, do not follow the old "rule" that the longest answer is likely to be the right one.
23. There will be answer choices that are meant to distract you from the correct answer. These are plausible choices that less knowledgeable people will pick. Such choices make it appear as though some questions have two or more right answers. To many people, it seems as though there are only shades of difference between the choices. As noted earlier, make sure you look for the best answer for such questions, and think about the situation in terms of project management good practices.
24. Be aware that questions may also include irrelevant information, to distract you from the real problem in the situation being described.

25. Look for words and phrases such as “still,” “yet,” “first,” “last,” “next,” “except,” “not,” “most likely,” “less likely,” “primary,” “initial,” and “most.” Make certain you clearly read the question, and take note of these words so you will answer the question correctly.
26. Watch for choices that are true statements but do not answer the question.
27. Watch for choices that contain common project management errors. They are intentionally there to determine if you really know project management. You can combat this by looking for errors in your knowledge and correcting those errors as you go through this book. (See the “Common Project Management Errors and Pitfalls” section at the end of this chapter.)
28. Options that represent broad, sweeping generalizations tend to be incorrect, so be alert for words such as “always,” “never,” “must,” “completely,” “all,” and so forth. Alternatively, choices that represent carefully qualified statements tend to be correct, so be alert for words such as “often,” “sometimes,” “perhaps,” “may,” and “generally.”
29. You may see some poorly worded or grammatically incorrect questions or answer choices on the exam; don’t let this distract you.
30. Look for answers that support the value of project management with underlying messages such as, “Hooray for project management!”; “The project manager is so important”; or “The WBS is so useful.” They are generally the correct choice.

The exam will not be scored until you indicate you are ready, or four hours are up. You will also be asked if you are certain you want to score your exam after you submit it. You will receive a printed summary of your test results. If you pass, the testing center will print out a certificate, and you will officially be certified. If you do not pass, PMI will send you information on retaking the exam. You will have to pay an additional fee to retake the exam.

Tricks to Keep in Mind

Are you ready for some very important tricks to keep in mind when you take the exam? Pay careful attention.

A major reason people get questions wrong on the exam is that they do not do or realize the following:

- Recognize that “rules” (what we think should be best) are meant to be broken. Rules, such as what to do when there is a conflict, can change depending on the situation. This drives some people crazy—especially those who expect the exam to just test facts. You need to be able to read and understand the situations on the exam and then be able to figure out the best thing to do *in that situation*. Most of the questions are situational.
- Unless stated otherwise, assume proper project management was done. For example, assume there is a charter, a WBS, and management plans on the projects described on the exam, even if the question does not say so. If you answer a question thinking about real-world projects that do not use proper project management, you might miss the correct answer. If the question makes it clear that proper project management has not been done, you’ll likely need to think about what is missing, how to solve the root cause of the problem, and how to make sure proper project management is carried out going forward on the project.
- When reading a scenario question, notice which part of the project it is occurring in. If the situation described in the question is taking place during project planning, your answer may be different than if it was occurring during project executing.
- Be prepared for questions with multiple problems. A question may describe a situation with various problems and ask you to determine which one to address first. Here is an example:

Two stakeholders are disagreeing via a series of emails as to whether a deliverable meets the acceptance criteria. The cost-benefit analysis done in planning did not support delivering a higher level of performance, and the stakeholders agreed. A team member has just informed you that a problem with

his work has occurred. The deliverable he is working on must be shipped today or there will be a project breach. One of the stakeholders having the email disagreement comes to you to complain about the other. What should you do?

The following tips will help you focus on the most important problem in order to select the best answer. It is important to note that all these tips will not apply all the time, and they do not have an order of importance.

- Determine the immediate problem to address.
- Deal with the root cause first.
- Deal with the problem with the greatest negative impact first.
- Solve the problem that occurred the earliest.
- Look for a proactive solution.



Common Project Management Errors and Pitfalls

As mentioned at other points in this book, the exam often includes common errors in project management as possible answers. Read the following summary of some of the major errors even highly experienced project managers make, and make sure you understand why these are errors.

Common project management errors include the following:

- Focusing primarily on asking for percent complete
- Holding “go around the room” status meetings
- Spending most of your time micromanaging team members by constantly checking on them
- Asking team members to cut 10 percent off their estimates
- Thinking a bar (Gantt) chart from scheduling software is a project management plan
- Not attempting to obtain finalized requirements
- Not getting real resource commitments
- Not having a rewards and recognition system
- Not focusing on quality
- Not having a change control system
- Not having management plans
- Not measuring against the project management plan
- Not creating metrics to measure and evaluate performance
- Not spending time finding and eliminating root causes of problems or deviations
- Not implementing corrective actions to keep the project in line with the project management plan
- Not reevaluating the effectiveness of the project management plan
- Not reevaluating the accuracy or completeness of scope, schedule, or cost
- Not keeping the project management plan and project documents updated to reflect changes and revised information about the project
- Ignoring resource managers’ responsibilities to manage ongoing business operations in addition to responding to project needs (team and physical resources).
- Not realizing the project can affect the reputation of team members

- Not realizing the project manager has resource responsibilities; these can include responsibilities to the project team (such as creating project job descriptions, evaluating individual and team performance on the project, and adding letters of recommendation to team members' human resource files) as well as responsibilities related to physical resources
- Blaming unrealistic schedules on management instead of realizing that developing a realistic schedule is the project manager's responsibility

A Day-in-the-Life Exercise

The following exercise provides one last opportunity to test yourself to see if you really understand what a project manager does.

Exercise Many people do not practice the breadth of project management good practices described in the *PMBOK® Guide* on their real-world projects. This may be because they have not received the training needed or because they do not understand the project management process or its value. A lack of experience in using these practices to properly manage large projects can have a significant impact on how you perform on the exam. This exercise is designed to help you uncover what you might be doing incorrectly on your projects so differences between your real-world experience and the world of project management good practices do not get in your way on the exam. In the following table, list which activities a project manager should spend the most, medium, and least amount of time on during a typical day after planning is complete and the team has begun working on the project.

Most

Medium

Least

Answer There are a number of correct answers to this question. Let's first review what should not be on your "Most" list, and then we will look at what efforts a project manager should focus on during the course of a day. Think through the items listed here, and identify whether you have any misconceptions about what you should be doing as a project manager. If you do, you need to clarify and fix these misconceptions before you take the exam.

Items that should not be on your "Most" list:

- Dealing with problems and unexpected changes (rather than preventing them)
- Schedule and other items related to schedule management
- Meetings
- Micromanaging
- Completing work activities

The following items should have been included in your "Most" list:

- Using project management tools, such as a charter, WBS, and project management plan
- Measuring
- Recommending and taking corrective and preventive actions
- Doing risk management and implementing risk responses
- Coaching, mentoring, and team building
- Communicating and using active listening
- Managing by exception to the plan
- Interacting with stakeholders to maintain and improve stakeholder engagement
- Looking for possible changes

Conclusion

You have reached the end of this book! Congratulations!

As noted in chapter 1, we recommend that you review the information in this book several times to really retain what you learned. So read through this book again, focusing on the areas where you have identified gaps in your knowledge. In a second pass through this book you will find that you understand some topics differently than you did the first time, and other concepts will stand out to you that you previously missed. In particular, make sure you review the PMI-isms in chapter 1, the most commonly used tools and techniques in chapter 2, and Rita's Process Chart™ and the project management process exercises in chapter 3. Having a solid understanding of the project management process and the material presented in this book will not only help you pass the exam (you can use logic instead of having to memorize information), it will also enable you to apply what you have learned to your real-world projects.

Thank you for taking this journey with us. We hope you will come back to RMC Learning Solutions after you have earned your PMP. We can help you continue your training and earn PDUs to maintain your certification through our advanced instructor-led and eLearning courses and products. So good luck, and we look forward to seeing you after you pass the exam!