

# Tricks of the Trade® for Studying for This Exam

ONE

## Why Take the PMP Exam?

Preparing to take the PMP exam is a journey. If you let it, this journey can help you expand yourself and your abilities. In preparing for the exam, you have an opportunity to become a better project manager—not just pass the exam. This opportunity to learn is one of the best reasons to get your PMP certification.

To pass the PMP exam, you cannot simply cram a lot of information into your brain and try to retain it just long enough to get through the four-hour testing period. Instead, you need to take your knowledge to the next level. You need to truly understand the process of project management and what value that process can bring to your daily work on projects. The PMP exam is an international exam designed to prove your knowledge and experience in applying the art and science of project management. The exam focuses on situations you might encounter in the real world, rather than just asking you to repeat data you have learned. Achieving the PMP certification is a way to set yourself apart.

In addition to the opportunity to improve yourself and your abilities, there can be financial incentives for passing the exam. A 2015 salary survey conducted by the Project Management Institute (PMI®) found that PMP-certified project managers, across all countries, are paid on average 20 percent more than those without this certification. RMC has had students who received a bonus, a raise, or both when they passed the exam. Other students have reported they were offered a job when hundreds of other qualified candidates had applied, simply because they were PMP certified. Having a PMP certification can be the reason you get a job, keep your job, or are promoted.

## Qualifying to Take the Exam

To take the PMP exam, you must meet the requirements outlined by PMI. The current requirements are described in the following table.

Category	General Education	Project Management Education	Project Management Experience	Number of Questions
One	Bachelor's degree	35 contact hours	4,500 hours	Three years
Two	High school diploma	35 contact hours	7,500 hours	Five years

RMC offers CAPM exam prep courses (classroom or online training) and a CAPM Exam Prep System of products to use in preparing for the CAPM exam. Visit [rmcls.com](http://rmcls.com) for more information about this series of products and courses.

Keep in mind that just because you qualify on paper to take the exam does not mean you will be able to pass it. You must know project management and have experience applying it—this includes both managing and leading. Consider taking PMI's CAPM® exam if you do not meet the requirements in the previous table. You can find the requirements for the CAPM exam at [pmi.org](http://pmi.org). At the time this book was published, CAPM test takers were required to have a high school diploma as well as 1,500 hours of experience working on projects or 23 hours of project management education to qualify for the CAPM exam.

## Are You Ready for the PMP Exam?

In RMC's experience, 50 percent of those who fail the exam do so because they have not had project management training that uses PMI terminology and concepts. This is a serious factor to consider in determining whether you are ready to take the exam. Understanding PMI's approach to managing projects is not as simple as reading the *PMBOK® Guide*. Although reading the *PMBOK® Guide* will help you improve your knowledge, it will not teach you project management. This exam prep book will explain the project management process and help you understand it from PMI's perspective; however, if you find that many of the concepts and terms presented in this book are new to you—or you do not use important tools discussed in this book (such as a charter, WBS, network diagram, and management plans)—you probably need additional project management training before continuing to study.

Another large percentage of people who fail the exam do not have real-world experience working on large projects. Instead, they may be managing a help desk or small projects; some might not even be working as a project manager. The PMP exam is designed to identify those who have not had project management training and who do not have experience. It is not an exam for a beginning project manager or for one who hopes to become a project manager. On the exam, it is helpful to answer questions from the perspective of a project manager who is managing large projects. Therefore, the more experience you have had working on large projects with the tools and techniques as well as the inputs and outputs described in the *PMBOK® Guide*, the better prepared you will be for the exam.

The following are examples of large projects:

- Designing a new call center (versus handling small call center projects)
- Designing a new manufacturing process (versus manufacturing a standard product for a customer)
- Installing commercial software across a company (versus installing a PC desktop operating system and associated software updates)
- Designing and constructing a new building (versus getting an existing building repainted)

What is the depth of your knowledge and understanding of project management? Review the following list. Do you routinely experience two or more of the following problems on projects? If so, you may benefit from learning more about project management prior to taking the exam.

- Cost or schedule overruns
- Unrealistic schedules
- Excessive changes to the scope or schedule
- Communication problems and increased conflict
- Running out of time near the end of the project
- Unsatisfactory quality
- Low morale
- Team member uncertainty about what needs to be done
- Excessive rework and overtime
- Too many project meetings

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Now think about your project management experience, particularly your experience working on large projects. Review the following list of topics covered on the exam. Do you understand these topics, and do you currently apply the tools and techniques included in this list when working on your projects?

- The step-by-step process for managing projects, including why each step is necessary
- The roles of the project manager, sponsor, team, and stakeholders
- The use of historical information from previous projects
- The use of lessons learned from previous projects as well as the creation of lessons learned for current projects
- What a project charter is and how to create it
- What a work breakdown structure (WBS) is (not a list or bar chart) and how to create it
- How to manually create a network diagram
- What the critical path is, how to find it, and what benefits it provides the project manager
- Three-point estimating
- Monte Carlo analysis
- Earned value analysis
- Schedule compression (crashing and fast tracking)
- Managing float
- How to create a realistic schedule
- Managing the quality of both the project and the resulting product(s) or deliverables
- Developing relationships with stakeholders, and keeping them interested and involved in the project
- What is included in the process of risk management
- Calculating reserves and understanding their relationship to risk management
- Creating a realistic and approved project management plan that you are willing to be held accountable to achieving
- Monitoring and controlling the project according to the project management plan
- Managing change requests, and controlling change
- Considering the professional and social responsibilities expected of a project manager when managing a project

If you are unfamiliar with any of the items in this list, we suggest you take our three-day PM Tricks of the Trade® In-person or Live Online class. This course will assist you in dealing with situational questions on the exam, and will also give you over half of the contact hours required to sit for the PMP exam. Please visit [rmcls.com](http://rmcls.com) or call (952) 846-4484 for more information.

On large projects, a project manager does not have time for incorrect project management activities. A project can easily get out of control if the project manager spends too much time solving problems rather than preventing them, or micromanaging people instead of making sure they know what they need to do before the project starts. When preparing for the exam, think about the concepts presented in this book (and those you've learned through your training) in terms of what a project manager of a large, plan-driven project should be doing. This will help you identify gaps between your own project management experience and PMI's approach to managing projects, and will therefore better prepare you to answer questions on the exam.

## Applying to Take the Exam

You must submit an application to PMI to take the exam. Applications may be submitted online or by mail. Submit online if at all possible, since PMI's response time is faster for electronic submissions. In addition, the online application process makes it easier for you to document your project management hours and experience while adhering to the application guidelines. (Numerous spreadsheets for documenting your

project management experience are available online, but using one not created by PMI often means you'll end up duplicating your application efforts.) After submitting your application, you'll receive a notice that will confirm your application has been accepted; you will then be prompted to pay for your exam appointment. Once payment is received, you'll receive an email authorizing you to make an appointment to take the exam. You may be subject to an audit of your application before it is approved. Be aware that an audit will delay your authorization to take the exam.

The exam is usually offered on a computer at designated testing sites, but it might be different depending on the country you are in. Your authorization notice will give you specific instructions. The PMI website has information about testing locations and languages available for the exam; visit [pmi.org](http://pmi.org) for details.

Once you receive your authorization notice, you must pass the exam within one year. (You can take the exam up to three times within that year; if you fail all three times, you must wait one year to reapply for the exam.) In some instances, testing centers may not have openings for several weeks.

## How to Use This Book

**Be Sure You Have Current Materials for the Exam** Before you begin using this book, you should make sure it's the correct edition. RMC products are updated to give you the most current information available, and take into account the latest changes to the exam. Previous editions of this book are out of date and should not be used to try to pass the exam. This edition of the *PMP® Exam Prep* book is in alignment with the *PMBOK® Guide, Sixth Edition* that was published September 6, 2017, and is meant to be used to study for exams taken after March 26, 2018. This edition also reflects the information in the Exam Content Outline dated June 2015.

**How This Book Is Organized** Most of the chapters in this book have been organized the same way: an introductory discussion, a list of Quicktest topics (generally listed in order of importance), Rita's Process Chart™, review materials, and a practice exam. All page references in this book refer to the *PMBOK® Guide, Sixth Edition*, unless otherwise stated. This *PMP® Exam Prep* book can be used alone, but it is also part of our PMP Exam Prep System that includes our PM FASTrack® Cloud exam simulator as well as our *Hot Topics* flashcards.

**Introduction to Each Chapter** The introductory discussion provides an overview of the chapter and key information for understanding the material covered in the chapter.

**Quicktest** The list at the beginning of each chapter indicates the topics covered in the chapter and our impression as to their general order of importance. To test your knowledge of the chapter contents and to review what is most important, refer back to this list when you are finished with each chapter.

**Rita's Process Chart™** Created in 1998 for the first edition of this book, Rita's Process Chart™ has been greatly expanded to help you understand the process of managing a project. It is a key trick for passing the exam with less study. You will first see this chart in chapter 3, Project Management Processes. It then appears in most of the remaining chapters in the book, with the relevant processes highlighted for each chapter. Use the chart at the beginning of each chapter to understand how the different knowledge areas relate to the efforts involved in the project management process.

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**Review Materials and Exercises** This book contains extensive review materials and many exercises. These materials, which can be found within each chapter, have been developed based on accelerated learning theory and an understanding of the difficult topics on the exam. Make sure you do the exercises, rather than jumping right to the answers. Do not skip the exercises, even if their value does not seem evident to you. The exercises and activities are key benefits of this book. They will help you pass the exam.

The answers are listed immediately following the exercises. We have found that it is most effective to place the answers right after the exercises rather than later in the book. If you want to keep yourself from seeing the answers, here is a trick: keep a blank piece of paper handy to cover the answers until you have completed each exercise and are ready to review them.

**TRICKS OF THE TRADE** Also included in the review material are tricks to passing the exam called Tricks of the Trade® (a registered trademark of RMC). The tricks are designated by the image shown here to the left and will give you some extra insight about what you need to know about project management and how to study for the exam. Many of the Tricks of the Trade® first described or presented in this book have since become industry standards.



Our method of helping you prepare for the exam does not focus on rote memorization. It focuses on understanding the actions and tools of project management. The few things you should memorize are designated by this image.

**Practice Exam** The practice exam at the end of each chapter allows you to review the material and test your understanding. Please refer to the "How to Study for the PMP Exam" section on page 14 to understand how and when to use these practice exams as part of your overall study plan. On the following pages, you will find a score sheet to use as you take the practice exams. Make a copy of it for each practice exam.

Note that the practice exam questions are representative of the knowledge and principles tested on the exam. However, in many cases, the exam questions are much longer than those presented in this book. To gain valuable experience answering longer questions, consider purchasing PM FASTrack® Cloud exam simulator, described below.

Please also keep in mind that you cannot simply practice answering questions to prepare for the exam. The questions in this book and in PM FASTrack® are provided to help you assess your knowledge and become familiar with the types of questions on the exam. Make sure you focus your study efforts on reading this book, doing the exercises and review activities, and filling gaps in your project management knowledge.

The questions in this book are representative of what you may see on the exam, but do not simulate the complete range and depth of all PMP exam questions.

Please see the "Practice Exam" section on this page for more information.

**Endnotes** Throughout this book, you will see superscripted note references when many project management terms are first introduced. These notes provide the historical origin of the terms or concepts and are explained in the back of this book. Historical origin is not tested on the exam. These notes are provided for your interest and reference. For some, understanding the development of a concept helps them remember it better. For others, such information is a distraction. If you find these notes distracting, do not continue to read them. Instead, focus your study efforts on the primary content of this book.

**Using This Book with PM FASTrack® Cloud Exam Simulator** This book may be used on its own or in conjunction with the PM FASTrack® Cloud exam simulator. For information about using PM FASTrack® in conjunction with this book, see Plan A under "How to Study for the PMP Exam" on page 14. To access a free demo of the exam simulator, visit [exams.rmcls.com](http://exams.rmcls.com).

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**PLEASE NOTE:** RMC does not currently offer PM FASTrack® via amazon.com, auction sites, or e-commerce sites other than its own (rmcls.com). PM FASTrack® is an extremely valuable study tool, and it has been copied and sold by unscrupulous third parties. These pirated versions do not work, and will not be supported or refunded by RMC for any reason. If you wish to purchase a subscription to the exam simulator that complements this book, visit rmcls.com.

**Score Sheet** Use this score sheet to test your understanding. Make a copy of it for each chapter's practice exam. (NOTE: If you are using RMC's PMP Exam Prep System, please see the study plan on page 14.)

Question Number	First Time	Why I Got the Question Wrong	Second Time	Why I Got the Question Wrong
1				
2				
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23				

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Question Number	First Time	Why I Got the Question Wrong	Second Time	Why I Got the Question Wrong
24				
25				
26				
27				
28				
29				
30				
31				
32				
33				
34				
35				
36				
37				
38				
39				
40				
41				
42				
43				
44				
45				
Total Score	First Time		Second Time	

How will I improve how I take the exam next time?

## Other Materials to Use to Study for the PMP Exam

You can use this book as a stand-alone prep tool or combine it with the following products for a comprehensive exam prep experience. Do not risk overstudying or confusing yourself by using other prep books or products beyond the following resources.



### Rita Mulcahy's™ PM FASTrack® Cloud Exam Simulator

Our PM FASTrack® Cloud exam simulator offers over 1,600 questions—including tricky situational questions with more than one “right” answer. In addition to this book, PM FASTrack® is the most important tool for passing the exam. The online subscription allows you to create sample exams by knowledge area, process group, keyword, PMP simulation, and even super PMP simulation. It also saves you a huge amount of time by automatically scoring and keeping records of exams, and it includes comprehensive grading and reporting capabilities. All questions are cross-referenced with this book or the *PMBOK® Guide*, making it easy to go back to the topics on which you need more studying.



### Rita Mulcahy's™ Hot Topics Flashcards (Hard Copy or Audio CD)

Are you looking for a way to prepare for the PMP exam that fits into your busy schedule? Now you can study at the office, on a plane, or even in your car with RMC's portable and extremely valuable *Hot Topics* flashcards—in hard copy or audio CD format. Over 300 of the most important and difficult-to-recall PMP exam-related terms and concepts are now available for study as you drive, fly, or take your lunch break. Add instant mobility to your study routine.



### PMP® Exam Prep eLearning Course

This self-directed eLearning course for the PMP exam offers bite-size mobile-friendly interactive lessons, hundreds of audio clips, dozens of exercises and games, digital *Hot Topics* flashcards, unlimited timed and scored practice exams with the PM FASTrack® exam simulator, and all 35 contact hours necessary to apply to sit for the PMP exam. It also includes a comprehensive document library along with an abridged digital copy of this exam prep book.

### Instructor-Led PMP® Exam Prep Courses

For those who learn more easily in a person-to-person interactive environment, RMC regularly schedules a variety of instructor-led exam prep classes as well as live virtual courses. All courses were originally designed by Rita Mulcahy to prepare you for the PMP exam in a fun and effective way—with minimal studying after class. For more information or to find a class near you, go to [rmcls.com](http://rmcls.com).

### PMBOK® Guide, Sixth Edition

The *PMBOK® Guide, Sixth Edition* (2017), is the international standard for project management from PMI.

## What Is the PMP Exam Like?

Keep in mind three important things about the PMP exam. First, the exam is not a test of the information in the *PMBOK® Guide*. Second, you cannot rely only on real-world experience. Third, training in professional project management that is aligned with the *PMBOK® Guide* is critical.

The exam includes 200 multiple-choice questions with four answer choices per question. The exam must be completed in four hours. Twenty-five (25) of the 200 exam questions are experimental questions, meaning they are not included in your score for the exam. These questions will be randomly placed throughout the exam. You will not know which ones are which. The experimental questions are included by PMI to validate questions for future inclusion in their master database. Your score will be calculated based on your response to the remaining 175 questions. PMI has not published what it considers to be a passing score. Based on the exam history, however, we estimate that it is somewhere between 65 and 69 percent (about 114 to 121 questions out of 175 answered correctly).

The questions are randomly generated from a database containing hundreds of questions. The questions may jump from topic to topic, and a single question may integrate multiple concepts. You get one point for each correct answer. There is no penalty for wrong answers.

The following table breaks out the percentage of scored questions currently on the exam in each process group.

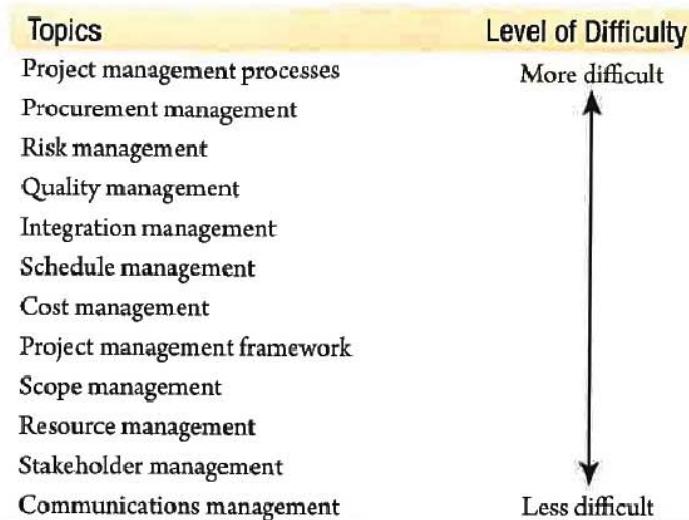
Project Management Process Group	Percentage of Questions
Project initiating	13%
Project planning	24%
Project executing	31%
Project monitoring and controlling	25%
Project closing	7%

PMI occasionally makes changes to aspects of the exam, including the qualification requirements, the application process, the passing score, and the breakdown of questions in each process group. For the latest information, please visit [pmi.org](http://pmi.org) and read your authorization notice carefully. Any differences between what is listed here and what is communicated by PMI should be resolved in favor of PMI's information.

The following diagram indicates the topics tested on the exam along with their level of difficulty. For many people, the most difficult areas are project management processes, procurement management, risk management, quality management, and integration management. This information is based on our own research, in which we asked students preparing to take the exam to identify which knowledge areas they find to be the most difficult.

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This next diagram indicates the level of difficulty of the process groups. Many people find project monitoring and controlling, executing, and initiating to be the most difficult. Make sure you study these carefully.



Be aware of the following for the PMP exam:

- The exam tests knowledge, application, and analysis. This makes the exam more than a test of memory. You must know how to apply the information in this book and be able to analyze situations involving this information. Do not expect the exam to have all straightforward, definition-type questions.
- It is important to realize that the exam deals with real-world use of project management. The majority of the questions are situational. For those who have not used project management tools in the real world—or whose project management efforts include common errors—these questions can be extremely difficult.
- There may be instances on the exam where the same data is used for multiple questions, such as with network diagram questions.
- Although it often feels like more for the test taker, historically there have been only 10 to 12 questions requiring you to identify inputs or outputs from the *PMBOK® Guide*. To answer these questions correctly, however, you need to know more than just the input and output names: you need to understand the processes involved and how the inputs feed into and the outputs result from the processes. (Inputs and outputs are discussed in later chapters.)
- Expect 15 to 20 formula-related calculations on the exam.
- Expect 10 to 15 earned-value questions on the exam. Not all of these require calculations using the formulas.

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- Most acronyms will be spelled out (for example, the exam typically uses the full term “work breakdown structure” rather than “WBS”), but you should know both the acronym and the full term.
- The correct answers should not include direct quotations from the PMBOK® Guide.
- Most people feel uncertain about only 40 or fewer of the 200 questions on the exam.
- Many people need about three hours to finish the first pass through the exam; they then spend the rest of the time reviewing their answers.

The questions on the exam are mostly situational, many are ambiguous and wordy, and some even seem like they have two or more right answers. Be prepared for the following types of questions so you will not waste time or be caught off guard when you are taking the exam.

1. **Situational questions** These questions demonstrate why having project management experience is critical to passing this exam. Such questions require you to integrate your real-world experience and your knowledge of the exam concepts. For example:

*Question* You receive notification that a major item you are purchasing for a project will be delayed. What is the best thing to do?  
A. Replan your project to accommodate this delay.  
B. Notify your manager.  
C. Let the customer know about it, and talk over options.  
D. Meet with the team, and identify alternatives.

*Answer* D

2. **Questions with two or more right answers** Questions that appear to have two, three, or even four right answers are a major complaint from many test takers. Many questions will list several choices that could reasonably be done, or that less-experienced or less-qualified project managers would be likely to choose.

As you go through questions and review the answers in this book (or in PM FASTrack® for PMP Exam Prep System users), look for questions you think have more than one right answer and try to figure out why you think multiple choices are correct. We have intentionally included such questions in our products to give you exposure to the types of questions you will see on the exam; we provide explanations to help you understand why your right answer may not be the best choice.

Let's look again at the previous situational question. Couldn't we really do all of the choices? The right answer is certainly D, but isn't it also correct to tell the customer? Yes, but that is not the first thing to do. Essentially this question is really saying, “What is the best thing to do next?” As you answer practice questions, keep in mind the concept of the “best thing to do next” to help you decide which answer identifies the next step in proper project management.

3. **Questions with extraneous information** It is important to realize that not all information included in a question will be relevant. For example, the numbers in the following question are extraneous data.

*Question* Experience shows that each time you double the production of doors, unit costs decrease by 10 percent. Based on this, the company determines that production of 3,000 doors should cost \$21,000. This case illustrates:  
A. Learning cycle  
B. Law of diminishing returns  
C. 80/20 rule  
D. Parametric cost estimating

*Answer* D

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Many questions will be much longer than the previous example. But again, you may not need all the information presented to answer the question. For example, imagine we changed the previous question to include even more information.

*"Your company is a major manufacturer of doors and has received numerous awards for quality. As the head of the manufacturing department, you have 230 people reporting to you on 23 different projects. Experience shows that each time you double the production of doors, unit costs decrease by 10 percent. Based on this, the company determines that production of 3,000 doors should cost \$21,000. This case illustrates..."*

Can you see how the additional data does not change the intent of what is being presented in the question? The data is a distractor. On the exam, you will see data that is not needed to answer the question. The trick is to look at each question to determine what the question is asking—rather than getting lost in all the information provided. Then, you can determine what information to focus on to select the best answer to the question. Do not get upset if you have difficulty with these long questions. For computer-based exams, PMI has added strikethrough and highlight features so you can highlight relevant information and strike through unneeded data. Pay attention to how many times you read questions and answers. A Trick of the Trade® is to read a question once and then organize the data using the strikethrough and highlight tools in order to answer the question during your first read-through. If you are not sure of the answer, mark the question and come back to it later; note that your highlight and strikethrough notations will still be there. If you know you will not answer all questions during your first read-through, you know what to expect. You will stay calm and not lose confidence when you see such questions.

4. **Questions using made-up terms** Many people taking the exam expect that all the terms used as choices should mean something. But that's not the case. The exam often includes made-up terms. If you consider yourself well trained and see a term on the exam that you do not know, chances are it is not the right answer. For example:

**Question** The ongoing definition of a project as more information becomes available to the team is called:

- A. Scope validation
- B. Strategic planning
- C. Progressive elaboration
- D. Quantitative elaboration

**Answer** C

In this question, "quantitative elaboration" (choice D) is not a real project management term.

5. **Questions where understanding is important** Let's look at the following question:

**Question** The process of decomposing deliverables into smaller, more manageable components is complete when:

- A. Project justification has been established.
- B. Change requests have occurred.
- C. Cost estimates can be developed for each work element.
- D. Each work element is found in the WBS dictionary.

**Answer** C

In order to answer this question, you must understand the terms used, including the concept of decomposition and what value this technique has in the project management process.

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6. **Questions with a new approach to a known topic** There will be many instances where you understand the topic, but have never thought about it in the way the question describes. For example:

**Question** In a matrix organization, information dissemination is most likely to be effective when:

- A. Information flows both horizontally and vertically.
- B. The communication flows are kept simple.
- C. There is an inherent logic in the type of matrix chosen.
- D. Project managers and functional managers socialize.

**Answer** A

Many people know what a matrix organization is but have not taken the time to consider how this organizational structure affects the directions in which information is shared.

7. **Questions with more than one item in each choice** Let's look at the following example:

**Question** The seller on the project has presented the project manager with a formal notification that the seller has been damaged by the buyer's activities. The seller claims that the buyer's slow response to requested approvals has delayed the project and has caused the seller unexpected expense. The first things the project manager should do are:

- A. Collect all relevant data, send the data to the company attorney, and consult with the attorney about legal actions.
- B. Review the contract for specific agreed-upon terms that relate to the issue, see if there is a clear response, and consult an attorney if needed.
- C. Review the procurement statement of work for requirements, send a receipt of claim response, and meet to resolve the issue without resorting to legal action if possible.
- D. Hold a meeting with the team to review why the acceptances have been late, make a list of the specific reasons, and correct those reasons.

**Answer** B

These questions can seem hard until you apply this little trick: use the process of elimination, one item at a time. Consider the first item listed in each choice and eliminate the choices that contain an implausible first item. Then look at the second item in each remaining choice and eliminate any implausible choices. Keep going until you have only one choice remaining.

Watch out; sometimes the items in each choice show a flow or process. See the following example:

**Question** When managing a project, which of the following is the best order to deal with problems that arise?

- A. Go to the team, go to management, go to resource managers
- B. Go to resource managers, go to management, go to the customer
- C. Handle it yourself, go to the customer, go to management
- D. Resolve problems with resources you control, go to resource managers, go to the customer

**Answer** D

In this case, you need to look at each choice independently to see if the process listed is correct.

8. **Excessively wordy questions** Instead of saying, “The project is behind schedule,” the exam might use wordier phrasing, such as, “The project float was zero and has recently gone to negative 2.” Instead of saying, “The team is not reporting properly,” the exam could say, “The team has lost sight of the communications management plan.” The first step in answering many questions is to determine what the question is asking, and then to translate the wordy phrasing. If you are not a native English speaker, this can be an especially big problem, but it is also difficult for native English speakers. Just take your time, and practice reading wordy questions before you take the exam.

See chapter 15 of this book for more information on the exam and additional help in assimilating the information provided throughout this book.

## How to Study for the PMP Exam

Some people believe you need to read every resource available and spend as much time as possible preparing for the PMP exam. Do not make that mistake. You should not read every book you can find, and there is a risk in overstudying. Instead, we recommend the approach outlined in the following sections.

**The Magic Three** Studies have shown that if you visit a topic three times, you will remember it. Therefore, you should read this book once and then skim through it two more times, focusing most on the activities you do not do in the real world and on the concepts you have trouble understanding.

**Be in Test-Taking Mode** The actual exam will not present questions in order based on process groups. Get used to jumping from one topic to another. You’ll also need to practice answering questions for four hours. You can do this by skipping all practice exams until you feel ready to answer the questions. Then take all practice exams in one sitting (see step 4 in plan B later in this chapter). Do not underestimate the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of taking an exam lasting that long. You can also get into test-taking mode using our PM FASTrack® exam simulator.

**Your Step-by-Step Study Plan** We recommend that you use one of the following study plans. Follow Plan A if you own RMC’s complete PMP Exam Prep System. Follow Plan B if you do not own the entire system.

### Plan A: Using This Book with the PMP Exam Prep System (*PMP® Exam Prep book, PM FASTrack® Cloud Exam Simulator, and Hot Topics Flashcards*)

One common mistake made by people who purchase the PMP Exam Prep System is to spend most of their time answering question after question in PM FASTrack®, thinking that will prepare them to pass the exam. This approach won’t work. As we mentioned earlier, you need to focus your study efforts on reading this book, completing the exercises and review activities, and filling the gaps in your project management experience. To do this, follow the steps listed here to study this book in conjunction with using PM FASTrack® and the *Hot Topics* flashcards:

1. Read this book for the first time and complete all the exercises, but don’t do the practice exams at the end of each chapter. Spend more time on the areas where you have the most gaps in your knowledge or real-life project management experience, and on items you did not know or did not do prior to beginning this course of study. Refer to Rita’s Process Chart™ for each chapter, and be sure you

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understand all the efforts involved in the knowledge areas you are working on. At the same time, skim through the corresponding chapter in the *PMBOK® Guide* to get an understanding of the flow of the processes.

2. As you finish each chapter, review the Quicktest terms listed on the first page of the chapter to make sure you know the meaning of each term or concept. Use the *Hot Topics* flashcards to improve recall and test your understanding of that chapter.
3. If it is at all possible, form a study group after you have read the book for the first time on your own. This will actually make your study time shorter and more effective. You will be able to ask someone questions, and the studying (and celebrating afterward) will be more fun. A study group should consist of only three or four people. (See the “How to Use This Book in a Study Group” section later in this chapter.)
4. Skim through this book again.
5. Make sure you really know the material, and then take a full exam simulation on PM FASTrack®. This step will give you a baseline against which to track your progress as you continue to study.

**WARNING:** You should limit yourself to no more than two full exam simulations before you take the actual exam. Otherwise, you diminish the value of PM FASTrack® by memorizing questions and answers that will not be presented in the exact same way on the exam.

**WARNING:** If you do not score over 70 percent the first time you take a full exam simulation (not just an individual knowledge area or process group exam), you may need a refresher in core project management concepts. If you have taken a basic project management class, review the materials you received from that class. If you have not had such a class, consider taking one.

6. Review each question you got wrong in PM FASTrack®, writing down the specific reasons for each wrong answer. Assess why the correct choice is correct and why the other answers are wrong.
7. Use your list of why you got each question wrong (from step 6) to determine which material to study further. This will help you determine how much more study time you need and which chapters to read more carefully. Continue to study this book, focusing on the areas in which you have gaps in your knowledge and skimming the sections or chapters on which you did well. Correct any errors in your understanding of the concepts discussed in this book. Review the *PMBOK® Guide* to focus on these gaps. And remember, think large project and how proper project management should be done, regardless of how you manage your projects in the real world.
8. If you had difficulty with certain knowledge areas, process groups, or concepts and you have studied your gap areas, you may want to answer a small sample of questions (no more than 20) using the Knowledge Area, Process Group, or Keyword function in PM FASTrack®. Analyze why you answered any questions wrong, and continue to study your gap areas.

**WARNING:** You might be tempted to answer more than 20 questions, but that number should be sufficient to help you assess whether you have progressed in the particular knowledge area, process group, or concept—or whether you need to study more. Answering more than 20 questions in a particular area can diminish the value of PM FASTrack® and will not prepare you properly for the breadth of the exam experience.

9. Take your final PMP simulation exam. You should score over 75 percent before you take the real exam. You are overusing PM FASTrack® if you see many of the questions repeated.
10. Use the *Hot Topics* flashcards and other materials to retain the information you have learned until you take the exam.
11. **PASS THE EXAM!**

### Plan B: Using This Book as a Stand-Alone

1. Read this book for the first time and complete all exercises, but don't do the practice exams at the end of each chapter. Spend more time on the areas where you have the most gaps in your knowledge or your real-life project management experience, and on items you did not know or did not do prior to beginning this course of study. Refer to Rita's Process Chart™ for each chapter, and be sure you understand all the efforts involved in the knowledge areas you are working on. At the same time, skim through the corresponding chapter in the *PMBOK® Guide* to get an understanding of the flow of the processes.
2. As you finish each chapter, review the Quicktest terms listed on the first page of the chapter to make sure you know the meaning of each term or concept.
3. If it is at all possible, form a study group after you have read the book for the first time on your own. This will actually make your study time shorter and more effective. You will be able to ask someone questions, and the studying (and celebrating afterward) will be more fun. A study group should consist of only three or four people. (See the "How to Use This Book in a Study Group" section later in this chapter.)
4. Once you feel confident about the material, take the practice exams at the end of each chapter in one sitting. This will give you a baseline to tell you how much you have learned. It will also help you determine how much additional study time you need and which chapters to read more carefully.
5. Review each question you got wrong in the chapter practice exams, writing down the specific reasons for each wrong answer on the Score Sheet that is provided in this chapter. Assess why the correct choice is correct and why the other answers are wrong. Continue to study this book, focusing on the areas in which you have gaps in your knowledge and skimming the sections or chapters on which you did well. Correct any errors in your understanding of the concepts discussed in this book. Review the *PMBOK® Guide* to focus on these gaps.

**WARNING:** If you do not score 70 percent or higher overall on the chapter practice exams, you may need a refresher in core project management concepts. If you have taken a basic project management class, review the materials you received from that class. If you have not had such a class, consider taking one. You cannot rely on these practice questions alone to prepare you for the exam.

6. Make sure you really know the material, and then retake the practice exams in the book. As with step 5, use the Score Sheet to identify in writing the specific, not general, reason you got each question wrong.
7. Use your list of why you got each question wrong (from step 6) to determine which material to study further, and then study this material. Remember, think large project and how proper project management should be done, regardless of how you manage your projects in the real world. Make sure you are confident you have filled your gaps before taking the exam.
8. PASS THE EXAM!

### How to Use This Book in a Study Group

To get started, pick someone to lead the discussion of each chapter (preferably someone who is not comfortable with the chapter, because the presenter often learns and retains the most in the group). Each time you meet, go over questions about topics you do not understand and review the hot topics on the exam using the *Hot Topics* flashcards, if you have them. Most groups meet for one hour per chapter. Either independently or with your study group, do further research on questions you do not understand or answered incorrectly.

Each member of the study group should have their own copy of this book, which provides exercises, homework, and even class activities. (Please note that it is a violation of international copyright laws to make copies of the material in this book or to create derivative works from this copyrighted book.)

Those leading a PMP exam preparation course of their own should contact RMC for information about our Training Partner Program. Training Partners receive significant discounts on this book and our PM FASTrack® Cloud exam simulator along with our *Hot Topics* flashcards. Discounts may also be available for other certification tools and products as well. Also note that Training Partners get exclusive access to additional RMC training materials.

## Recurring Themes—PMI-isms to Know for the PMP Exam

RMC has been helping people pass the PMP exam and become better project managers for more than 20 years. During that time, we have developed the following list of things that the exam emphasizes but that many project managers do not know. We suggest you read it now and then remember to reread it before you take the actual exam. Rita coined the term “PMI-isms” to refer to the things uniquely emphasized on the exam. Understanding PMI-isms will help you pick the best answer from what seems like more than one correct answer. Some of the topics are listed only here, and others are summarized here and described in more detail later in this book. For the exam, assume that you have (or do) all the following and that these items are true for your projects. As you review the list of PMI-isms here, place a check mark next to the ones that are true for your projects.

Place ✓ Here If  
It's True of Your  
Projects

### General PMI-isms

Project managers are the center of the project universe. Without a skilled project manager, a project is destined to fail. With a person educated in the skills of project management, regardless of title (whether they carry the title of project manager or not), a project will succeed.

The project manager puts the best interests of the project first—not their own interests.

The exam generally tests from the perspective of a project manager who understands the value of the tools and techniques of project management and knows how to adapt them to a large project. So, it's helpful to assume, unless stated otherwise, that the project manager is working on a large project that involves more than 200 people from many countries, will take at least one year to complete, has never been done before in the organization, and has a budget of \$10 million or more.

Project managers have all the power described in the *PMBOK® Guide* and perform all the stated activities in the real world.

The project manager is assigned during project initiating, not later in the life of the project.

The project manager understands the process of project management (i.e., what to do first, second, etc., and why). (For more on this, see Rita's Process Chart™ and Rita's Process Game™ in the Project Management Processes chapter.)

Organizations have a formal project selection process, and they always choose projects based on how well those projects meet the organization's strategic goals.

The project manager always knows why their project was selected by management, and they make sure those objectives and the business case are met while planning and managing the project.

Team members are motivated, empowered, and engaged, and come prepared with suggestions; they don't require micromanagement from the project manager.

# Tricks of the Trade® for Studying for This Exam

O N E

## General PMI-isms

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The project manager spends time planning, managing, assessing, and monitoring and controlling scope, schedule, cost, quality, risk, resources, and customer satisfaction.

Organizations have a project management office (PMO), and that office has important, clearly defined responsibilities regarding projects across the organization.

Organizations have project management policies, which the project manager adapts for use on their project. These policies may include project management methodologies, risk procedures, and quality procedures.

A project may be part of a program or portfolio, and the project's relationship to other projects could significantly influence how the project manager does their work.

Organizations have records (historical information and lessons learned) for all previous projects that include what the work packages were, how much each work package cost, and what risks were uncovered (referred to in the *PMBOK® Guide* as part of organizational process assets). The project manager uses this history from other projects to plan the current project. As the project progresses, the project manager feeds historical records and lessons learned from the current project back into the organization's knowledge base.

The project manager works within the existing systems and culture of a company (enterprise environmental factors), and one of a project's results is to provide input to improve those systems.

Every project has a project charter, which authorizes the project and the role of the project manager.

A work breakdown structure (WBS) and WBS dictionary are used on every project.

A project management plan is not a bar chart, but rather a series of management plans. The project manager knows what is involved in creating a project management plan.

The project manager creates and keeps current other documents (project documents) in addition to the project management plan to help plan, manage, and monitor and control a project.

Stakeholders are involved throughout the project. Their needs are taken into account while planning the project and creating the communications management plan and the stakeholder engagement plan. They may also help identify and manage risks.

People must be compensated for their work and deserve a fair and positive environment in which they can contribute their best work.

Gold plating (adding extra functionality) is not in the best interests of the project and should be prevented.

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## General PMI-isms

Place ✓ Here If  
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Projects

Since most projects are managed in a matrix environment, seemingly easy topics, such as motivation theories or conflict resolution, can be complicated on the exam.

The project manager has a professional responsibility to properly use the tools and processes of project management.

## Planning the Project

Place ✓ Here If  
It's True of Your  
Projects

Planning is important, and all projects must be planned.

The project manager plans the project with input from the team and stakeholders, not on their own.

Part of planning involves deciding which processes in the PMBOK® Guide should be used on each project and how to tailor those processes to the project. The approach (plan-driven or change-driven) to the project should also be determined.

There are plans for how the knowledge areas of scope, schedule, cost, quality, resources, communications, risk, procurement, and stakeholder management will be planned, managed, and monitored and controlled. These are called management plans, and every project has one for every knowledge area (note that the length and detail of these plans may vary by size and importance to the project).

If at all possible, all the required work and all the stakeholders are identified before the project work actually begins.

The project manager determines metrics to be used to measure quality.

The project manager plans to improve project processes.

The project manager creates a system to reward team members and stakeholders.

All roles and responsibilities are clearly documented and assigned to specific individuals on the project. These may include things such as reporting responsibilities, risk management assignments, and meeting attendance, as well as project work.

The project manager focuses extensively on identifying risks.

The stakeholders, as well as team members, are assigned risk identification and risk management duties.

The project manager realizes that managing risks saves the project time and money.

Project cost and schedule cannot be finalized without completing risk management.

## Planning the Project

Place ✓ Here If  
It's True of Your  
Projects

The project manager creates realistic estimates for the overall project schedule and its associated costs.

The project manager assesses whether the project can meet the end date and other project constraints and objectives. They then meet with management to resolve any differences before the project work starts. The project manager knows unrealistic schedules are their fault because they have tools and skills to help solve them.

The project manager plans when and how to measure performance against the performance measurement baseline, as documented in the project management plan, but also has other measurements to use to determine how the project is performing while the work is being done.

The project management plan is realistic, and everyone believes it can be achieved.

The exam defines a kickoff meeting in a way that may be different from your understanding of a kickoff meeting (see the Integration Management chapter).

## While the Project Work Is Being Done

Place ✓ Here If  
It's True of Your  
Projects

The project is managed to the project management plan, which is realistic and complete.

The project manager is responsible for documenting and sharing knowledge acquired during the project.

The project manager measures against the project management plan to help determine project status throughout the life of the project.

Projects are reestimated throughout the life of the project to make sure the end date and cost objectives will be met. Therefore, the project manager almost always knows if the project can meet the agreed-upon end date and budget.

Delays must be made up by adjusting future work, rather than by asking for more time.

The project manager has authority and power. They can say no and work to control the project for the benefit of the customer.

The project manager lets others know they cannot get something for nothing. A change in scope must be evaluated for its impacts to the project's schedule, cost, quality, risk, resources, and customer satisfaction. The project manager has enough data about the project to do this analysis.

## ONE Tricks of the Trade® for Studying for This Exam

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Projects

### While the Project Work Is Being Done

The project manager realizes that, over time, not everyone associated with the project will have the same understanding of what the project is and what could occur during the life of the project. Therefore, the project manager is continually looking to ensure everyone knows what is going on and has appropriate expectations.

The project manager understands, and takes seriously, resource responsibilities on a project.

The project manager spends time on such activities as team building and ensuring high team performance.

The project manager is proactive, and finds problems early, looks for changes, and prevents problems.

The project manager spends more time focusing on preventing problems than on dealing with problems.

Most problems that occur have a risk response plan already created to deal with them.

Risks are a major topic at every team meeting.

Team meetings do not focus on status. That can be collected by other means.

All changes to the project management plan flow through the change management process and integrated change control.

The project manager ensures that organizational policies are followed on the project.

The project manager recommends improvements to the performing organization's standards, policies, and processes. Such recommendations are expected and welcomed by management.

Quality should be considered whenever there is a change to any component of the project.

Quality should be checked before an activity or work package is completed.

The project manager works closely with the quality department in performing some of the quality activities discussed in the *PMBOK® Guide*.

The project manager is actively involved with the procurement process and assists in managing procurements.

The project manager understands contract language.

The project manager makes sure all the terms of the contract are met, including those that do not seem important.

## Closing the Project

Place ✓ Here If  
It's True of Your  
Projects

The project manager archives all project records.

No project is complete unless there has been final acceptance from the customer.

All projects produce a final report that gives the project team a chance to announce the project objectives have been met.

Which items in this list seem different from the way you manage your projects? Which of these items do you not understand? Reread this list when you think you are finished studying, and pay particular attention to those items you left unchecked. Are there any items you need to think about more to make sure you will remember them when you take the exam? Knowing these PMI-isms can make a significant difference on the exam.