PMI AUTHORIZED TRAINING PARTNER

The 2026 PMP® Readiness Checklist & Quick Reference

A planning guide for the updated exam — built around the 2026 Exam Content Outline, the PMBOK® Guide Eighth Edition lens, and the CAPM®-to-PMP decision.

Inside this guide

- The 2026 exam at a glance, with the reweighted domains
- A step-by-step readiness checklist
- The PMBOK® 8 framework lens
- CAPM®-to-PMP bridge prompts and exam-day strategy
- Quick-reference cheat sheets across all three domains

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SECTION 1

Know the exam you are actually sitting

The 2026 PMP® exam is built on a refreshed Exam Content Outline. The biggest shift is domain weighting: Business Environment expands sharply, while People and Process rebalance. Studying to the old split is the most common way candidates misallocate prep time.

33%	41%	26%
PEOPLE	PROCESS	BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

2026 Exam Content Outline domain weights. Prior outlines weighted Business Environment far lower — if your materials still show single digits there, they are out of date.

What each domain is really testing

People (33%)
Leading and developing teams, stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, and servant-leadership judgment under ambiguity.

Process (41%)
Delivering value through sound planning and execution — scope, schedule, cost, quality, risk, procurement, and integrated change control across predictive, agile, and hybrid approaches.

Business Environment (26%)
Governance, compliance, organizational change, benefits realization, sustainability, and keeping the project aligned to business strategy.

Exam structure: 180 questions, 230 minutes, two 10-minute breaks. Expect scenario-based items in multiple-choice, multiple-response, matching, and hotspot formats.

SECTION 2

Your step-by-step readiness checklist

Work top to bottom. If you can check every box, you are ready to schedule with confidence rather than hope.

ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION

- [ ] **Confirm you meet PMI's education + experience requirements**
  Degree and non-degree paths have different month thresholds.
- [ ] **Log your project experience by month, with role and outcomes**
  Have this documented before you open the application.
- [ ] **Secure 35 contact hours of formal PM education**
  Required to apply — the live cohort provides 35 PMI-approved contact hours.
- [ ] **Draft your application and review for an audit-ready record**

BUILD YOUR STUDY FOUNDATION

- [ ] **Take a baseline diagnostic to find your real starting point**
  Know your weak domains before you build a plan.
- [ ] **Map a week-by-week plan against the 2026 domain weights**
  Give Process and Business Environment the time their weighting demands.
- [ ] **Choose ECO-aligned materials, not PMBOK-mirrored outlines**
  The exam follows the Exam Content Outline.

SECTION 2 (continued)

Practice, then schedule

PRACTICE & READINESS

- [ ] **Practice with scenario-based, judgment-driven questions**
  Recall questions under-prepare you for how the exam is written.
- [ ] **Keep an error log and review the reasoning behind every miss**
  Patterns in your misses are your study plan.
- [ ] **Hit a consistent readiness benchmark before you book**
  Stable performance across full-length practice, not one lucky run.

EXAM LOGISTICS

- [ ] **Decide on a test center vs. online proctored exam**
- [ ] **Schedule your exam to create a deadline that drives focus**
- [ ] **Plan exam-day logistics: ID, environment check, breaks**

> **The PMBOK® Guide Eighth Edition lens**
> PMBOK® 8 is a supporting reference, not the test blueprint. Read it through the ECO: connect tasks to value delivery, governance, the performance domains, principles, and tailoring — then use it to reinforce the concepts the outline tells you will be tested.

SECTION 3

CAPM®-to-PMP bridge prompts

Already hold the CAPM®? The jump to PMP is less about new vocabulary and more about leadership judgment. Sit with these prompts honestly.

→ When a stakeholder escalates, can I tell when to coach, when to escalate, and when to act directly?

→ Can I choose a predictive, agile, or hybrid approach for a scenario and defend why?

→ Do I read questions for the **best** next action, not just a technically correct one?

→ Can I connect a project decision back to business value and governance, not only to the plan?

Exam-day strategy reminders

- Read for the PMI-preferred action — the most proactive, value- and people-centered choice.
- Eliminate the traps first: “do nothing,” “escalate immediately,” and “blame” answers are rarely right.
- Watch your pace; flag uncertain items and return rather than stalling.
- Use your scheduled breaks — reset your focus instead of pushing straight through.
- Trust prepared judgment over second-guessing; change an answer only with a clear reason.

Quick-Reference Cheat Sheets

The high-yield concepts, formulas, and decision rules across all three 2026 domains. Scan before study sessions and in your final review.

SECTION 4 · People (33%)

People domain quick reference

Leadership styles

Servant — team needs first (PMI favorite). **Transformational** — inspires through vision. **Transactional** — rewards/consequences. **Laissez-faire** — hands-off, expert teams. **Situational** — adapts to the team. *When unsure, put the team first.*

Tuckman team development

Forming → Storming → Norming → Performing → Adjourning. Teams can **regress** when membership changes — a performing team may return to storming.

Stakeholder engagement

Power/Interest grid: High/High = Manage Closely; High/Low = Keep Satisfied; Low/High = Keep Informed; Low/Low = Monitor. **Engagement levels:** Unaware → Resistant → Neutral → Supportive → Leading.

Communication

Interactive (most effective) / **Push** / **Pull**. Channels = **n(n–1) / 2**. **Salience model:** Power, Legitimacy, Urgency — all three = definitive stakeholder.

Conflict resolution (PMI order)

1. **Collaborate / problem-solve** (win-win, preferred). 2. Compromise. 3. Smooth / accommodate. 4. Force. 5. Withdraw / avoid. *When in doubt, collaborate.*

Negotiation & motivation

Integrative (win-win, preferred) vs **Distributive**. Theories: Maslow (hierarchy), Herzberg (hygiene vs motivators), McGregor (Theory X/Y), McClelland (achievement, affiliation, power).

SECTION 4 · Process (41%)

Process domain quick reference

Core documents

Charter — authorizes the project, names the PM. **PM plan** — how the project is executed. **Business case** — justifies the investment. Planning is iterative — revisit throughout.

Scope

Product vs **project** scope. **WBS:** decomposition to work packages; 100% rule; shows no sequence. **Scope creep** (uncontrolled change) and **gold plating** (unrequested extras) are both bad — use change control.

Schedule

Dependencies: FS (most common), FF, SS, SF (rare). **Estimating:** Analogous (quick), Parametric, Bottom-up (most accurate), Three-point. **PERT:** E = (O + 4M + P) / 6; SD = (P – O) / 6.

Critical path & float

Critical path = longest path = minimum duration; zero float. **Total float** = LS – ES. **Free float** = ES(next) – EF. **Compression:** crash first (adds cost), fast-track second (adds risk).

Cost & reserves

Estimate accuracy: ROM –25/+75%, Budget –10/+25%, Definitive –5/+10%. **Contingency reserve** — known-unknowns, PM controls. **Management reserve** — unknown-unknowns, sponsor controls.

Earned value (EVM)

CV = EV – AC; CPI = EV / AC. SV = EV – PV; SPI = EV / PV. EAC = BAC / CPI; ETC = EAC – AC. *EV comes first in every formula. Positive / index > 1 = good.*

Quality & risk

QA — process-focused, prevents defects. **QC** — product-focused, finds defects. **Threats:** Avoid, Transfer, Mitigate, Accept, Escalate. **Opportunities:** Exploit, Share, Enhance, Accept, Escalate.

Procurement & change

Contracts: FFP (buyer least risk) → T&M → CPIF/CPFF (seller least risk). **Change control:** identify → log → assess impact → CCB decision → implement if approved.

SECTION 4 · Business Environment (26%)

Business Environment quick reference

This is the domain that expanded most under the 2026 ECO. Treat it as a major scoring area, not an afterthought.

Compliance

Identify legal, regulatory, and organizational requirements early; classify them; and manage them as both requirements and risks. Confirm the project meets them before, during, and at closeout.

Benefits realization

Value often lands after the project ends. Define a benefits management plan, name who owns benefits post-handover, and measure outcomes against the business case over time.

Organizational change

Assess change readiness, build awareness and adoption, and support people through transition. Resistance is a stakeholder signal to manage, not ignore.

Strategy & value delivery

Tie every major decision back to business objectives and value. If a project drifts out of alignment, that is a governance conversation — escalate it.

Governance

Know the decision rights, escalation paths, and phase-gate / review points. Governance is who decides and how, not just what gets built.

External factors & sustainability

Scan the environment (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental). Weigh sustainability and ESG impacts as part of responsible delivery.

Ready to build the plan, not just the checklist?

See where you stand with the free PMP® diagnostic, then join the next live PMP® Exam Prep Mastery Cohort — 10 to 12 students, 35 PMI-approved contact hours, led personally by Dr. Parks and aligned to the 2026 ECO.

pmptrainingacademy.com/pmp-exam-diagnostic