

PMP® Exam Quick Study Guide — 2026

A high-impact revision guide aligned with the 2026 PMP® Exam Content Outline (ECO) and PMBOK® Guide – Eighth Edition.

1. Exam Structure

Domain	Weight	Main Focus
People	33%	Leadership, conflict, teams, stakeholders, communication
Process	41%	Scope, schedule, cost, risk, quality, procurement, delivery
Business Environment	26%	Governance, compliance, strategy, organizational change

Remember:

- **180 questions**
- **240 minutes**
- About **75–80 seconds per question**
- **Two 10-minute breaks**
- Once you submit a section and begin a break, you **cannot return** to that section.
- Approximately **40% Predictive** and **60% Adaptive/Hybrid**

2. The PMP® Mindset

When answering situational questions, think:

PROACTIVE

- Look ahead.
- Identify root causes.
- Anticipate risks and issues.
- Prevent problems rather than simply reacting to them.

OWNERSHIP

- Take responsibility.
- Lead rather than command.
- Empower the team.

- Build trust and psychological safety.
- Use team agreements and collaboration.

VALUE-DRIVEN

- Focus on **outcomes and benefits**, not just outputs.
- Align decisions with stakeholder and organizational value.
- Consider sustainability.
- Ask: “**What creates the most value?**”

Quick rule:

Analyze → Collaborate → Act → Escalate when appropriate.

Don't jump straight to escalation unless the situation requires it.

3. Six Core Principles

1. Adopt a Holistic View

Consider the **whole project system**—people, processes, organization, stakeholders, risks, and external factors.

2. Focus on Value

Prioritize work that contributes to **meaningful outcomes and benefits**.

3. Embed Quality

Build quality into the **process and deliverable**, rather than waiting until the end to inspect for problems.

4. Be an Accountable Leader

Lead by example, adapt your leadership style, and take responsibility for project outcomes.

5. Integrate Sustainability

Consider **economic, social, and environmental** impacts.

Sustainability hierarchy:

Avoid → Minimize → Restore → Compensate/Offset

6. Build an Empowered Culture

Create an environment where people can contribute, make decisions, collaborate, and solve problems.

4. Development Approaches

Predictive

Best when:

- Requirements are relatively stable.
- Scope can be defined early.
- Change is expensive.
- Compliance or regulation requires extensive upfront planning.

Think: Plan → Baseline → Execute → Control

Adaptive / Agile

Best when:

- Requirements are uncertain or changing.
- Frequent stakeholder feedback is valuable.
- Work can be delivered incrementally.

Think: Plan → Build → Review → Adapt

Hybrid

Combines predictive and adaptive approaches.

Example:

Physical construction = Predictive
Software development = Adaptive

Inverted Constraints Triangle

Predictive:

Scope is relatively fixed → time/cost may change.

Adaptive:

Time and cost are generally fixed → **scope is adjusted/prioritized.**

5. Essential Formulas

Earned Value Management

Metric	Formula	Remember
CV	$EV - AC$	+ = under budget
SV	$EV - PV$	+ = ahead of schedule
CPI	$EV \div AC$	>1 = good
SPI	$EV \div PV$	>1 = good
EAC	$BAC \div CPI$	Expected final cost
ETC	$EAC - AC$	Cost remaining
VAC	$BAC - EAC$	+ = favorable
TCPI	$(BAC - EV) \div (BAC - AC)$	Efficiency needed to meet BAC

Easy memory trick:

Variance = subtract

- $CV = EV - AC$
- $SV = EV - PV$

Index = divide

- $CPI = EV \div AC$
- $SPI = EV \div PV$

6. Other Key Concepts

WBS 100% Rule

The WBS must represent **100% of the project's scope**—no more and no less.

Three-Point Estimate

Triangular:

$$(\text{Optimistic} + \text{Most Likely} + \text{Pessimistic}) \div 3$$

Output → Outcome → Benefit → Value

Think of the progression:

Output: What we create

↓

Outcome: What changes because of it

↓

Benefit: The measurable advantage

↓

Value: The overall worth to the organization/stakeholders

7. How to Handle Situational Questions

When faced with a difficult question:

Step 1 — Identify the problem

What is **actually** happening?

Step 2 — Find the root cause

Don't immediately treat the symptom.

Step 3 — Assess the context

Consider:

- Predictive vs. adaptive
- Team maturity
- Stakeholders
- Risk
- Governance
- Constraints
- Value

Step 4 — Choose the proactive response

Look for an answer that:

- Analyzes before acting
- Collaborates with stakeholders/team
- Addresses the root cause
- Protects value
- Follows appropriate governance

8. Common Distractor Patterns

Be cautious of answers that:

Immediately escalate without first analyzing or attempting resolution.

Immediately take action without understanding the problem.

Ignore the team and make an unnecessary autocratic decision.

Use a rigid methodology without considering project context.

Wait and see when proactive action is appropriate.

Focus only on outputs instead of outcomes and value.

Ignore stakeholders or prevent useful feedback.

Bypass governance or compliance requirements.

9. Last-Minute PMP® Reminders

Before selecting an answer, ask:

What is the root cause?

What should the PM do first?

Can the team solve this collaboratively?

What creates the most value?

What does the project context require?

Is this predictive, adaptive, or hybrid?

Am I addressing the problem proactively?

Does this protect quality, people, and sustainability?