

## The PMP Application Checklist

A practical guide to getting your PMP application approved, first try.

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The PMP exam is hard. Most candidates assume the exam is the only obstacle. It isn't. The **application itself** is where most candidates get stuck: 4–8 weeks from start to PMI approval before you can even schedule the exam, with a meaningful percentage of applications pulled into a random audit. The most common rejection reasons are **application-writing mistakes**, not eligibility issues. If you're trying to test before the **July 9, 2026 exam change**, the application is the bottleneck, not your study time.

### PART 1

## Eligibility: Do You Qualify?

PMI requires one of three eligibility paths. All paths require **35 contact hours** of project management education and that your experience falls within the **last 8 years**.

#### PATH A

##### Bachelor's Degree or Higher

- > **36 months** leading projects
- > Within the last 8 years
- > 35 PM contact hours
- > Most common path

#### PATH B

##### High School or Associate's Degree

- > **60 months** leading projects
- > Within the last 8 years
- > 35 PM contact hours
- > More experience required

#### PATH C

##### GAC-Accredited Bachelor's Degree

- > **24 months** leading projects
- > Within the last 8 years
- > 35 PM contact hours
- > Reduced requirement for PMI-accredited programs

## What counts as "leading projects"?

### ✓ COUNTS

- ✓ PM, Scrum Master, Product Owner
- ✓ Program Manager, Engineering Lead
- ✓ Project Coordinator (with leadership scope)
- ✓ Leading sub-projects within a larger initiative
- ✓ Internal projects (process improvement, IT migrations)

### ✗ DOES NOT COUNT

- ✗ Pure individual contributor work
- ✗ Months where you weren't actively leading
- ✗ Overlapping months on multiple projects
- ✗ (You cannot double-count concurrent roles)

Unsure whether you qualify? The PMI application form's experience section will calculate it for you. It's safer to apply with a borderline case than to assume you don't qualify.

## PART 2

### The 35 Contact-Hour Requirement

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PMI requires 35 hours of formal project management education before you apply. This is not the same as your work experience. It must be structured training from a recognized provider.

Source	Counts?	Notes
Live training class (PMP prep boot camp, CSM, etc.)	✓ Yes	Most common path; ThinkLouder classes qualify
Self-paced online courses (PMI-approved)	✓ Yes	Coursera, Udemy with PMI approval, etc.
University project management courses	✓ Yes	Must be PM-specific coursework
PMI conferences (e.g., PMI Global Summit)	✓ Yes	If you can document attended sessions
Internal company PM training	✓ Yes	Usually requires proof of attendance
Work experience	✗ No	Experience and education are separate requirements
Reading PMP books (PMBOK Guide, etc.)	✗ No	Self-study without a structured course doesn't count
General leadership training (not PM-specific)	✗ No	Must be project management focused

**Action item:** Before applying, list every PM-related training you've completed in the last 5 years with dates and hours. If you're under 35 hours, take a class to fill the gap before you apply, not after.

## PART 3

# The 8-Step Application Process

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## 1 Create your PMI account

Go to [pmi.org/certifications/project-management-pmp](https://pmi.org/certifications/project-management-pmp) and click "Apply Now." Creating the account is free; payment comes later.

Use a personal email, not your work address. Your PMI account is yours forever and outlives any one job.

## 2 Fill in contact and education info

Straightforward. Use your **legal name** exactly as it should appear on your certificate.

## 3 Document your project experience

This section takes the most time and rejects the most applications. For each project you list, you'll provide: project title and description, your role, start/end dates, hours by knowledge area, and a verifier contact. See Part 4 for writing guidance.

## 4 Document your 35 contact hours

List each course or training with: course name, provider, date completed, and total hours.

## 5 Submit the application

Click submit. You'll receive a confirmation email. Now you wait, typically 5 business days.

## 6 PMI review (5 business days)

You'll receive one of three responses: **Approved** (proceed to Step 7), **Audited** (see Part 5), or **Clarification needed** (usually fixable; address the request and resubmit).

## 7 Pay the exam fee

PMI Member exam fee	\$405 – \$425
Non-member exam fee	\$655 – \$675
PMI annual membership	~\$139 – \$164 / year
Savings by joining PMI first	~\$130+ savings; membership essentially pays for itself

Most candidates join PMI before paying the exam fee. The member discount more than covers the membership cost.

## 8 Schedule the exam

Once paid, you have **1 year** to take the exam with up to **3 attempts**. Testing is done online via Pearson VUE or in-person at a testing center.

Schedule the exam immediately after paying, even if the date is months out. A locked-in date is the single best motivator for studying.

PART 4

## Writing Experience Descriptions That Get Approved

This is the **#1 reason applications get rejected or held up**. Reviewers spend roughly 10 minutes on your descriptions. They're looking for three specific signals: project context, your specific role, and concrete deliverables.

**× BAD DESCRIPTION: GETS PULLED FOR REVIEW**

"Managed a software development project for a financial services company. Worked with team to deliver on time and on budget. Used Agile methodology."

**Problems:** No specifics, no your-role detail, no deliverables, no scope.

**✓ GOOD DESCRIPTION: GETS APPROVED**

"Led a 6-month software development project for a regional bank's customer onboarding portal (\$1.2M budget, team of 8 (6 developers, 1 designer, 1 QA). Owned project planning, sprint cadence, stakeholder communication, and risk management. Delivered the portal 3 weeks early; reduced customer onboarding time from 5 days to 4 hours. Coordinated weekly with VP Operations and the bank's compliance team. Used hybrid Scrum + Waterfall approach."

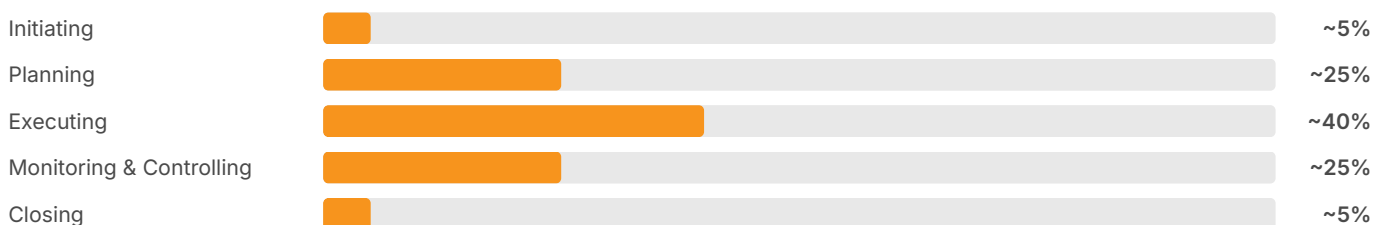
- ✓ Specific scope: budget, team size, duration
- ✓ Concrete deliverable and measurable outcome
- ✓ Clear ownership: your role explicitly named
- ✓ Stakeholder visibility: named who you worked with
- ✓ Methodology grounded in real process

**TEMPLATE STRUCTURE TO FOLLOW**

Led [project name]: [scope: budget, team size, duration].  
Owned [3–5 specific responsibilities].  
Delivered [concrete output] resulting in [measurable outcome].  
Coordinated with [stakeholders/sponsors].  
Used [methodology] with [adaptations for the context].

### Knowledge-Area Hour Allocation

For each project, allocate hours across PMI's five process groups. The math must work (roughly months × 160 hrs/month for part-time PM work) and the distribution must be realistic.



## PART 5

# Audit-Proofing Your Application

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PMI randomly audits a portion of applications. An audit does not mean rejection. It means PMI wants documentation to verify what you submitted. Being prepared in advance makes it painless.

### What an audit asks for



**Verifier confirmation:** Each verifier you listed receives an email from PMI asking to confirm your role and hours. Verifiers who don't respond hold up your audit.



**Certificates of completion:** For every course or training in your 35 contact hours. PDF, screenshot, or official certificate all work.



**Education transcripts:** For your degree. Most universities let you pull these online in minutes.



**Consistency check:** Your descriptions must align with what verifiers say. Mismatches (e.g., "managed team of 12" vs. "contributed to a team of 12") are flagged.

### What increases audit risk

Most audits are random. But vague descriptions, hour totals that don't add up, unusual claims (very early career, many projects in a short time), or unverifiable education claims all increase the odds. The single best protection: write specific, accurate descriptions and have your documentation ready before you submit.

## PART 6

# Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

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Mistake	Fix
Underestimating the application timeline	Plan 4–8 weeks from start to PMI approval
Vague experience descriptions	Use the template in Part 4: specific scope, role, deliverables
Insufficient contact hours	Take a class before applying, not after
Wrong or unconfirmed verifier emails	Confirm with each verifier before submitting
Hour math that doesn't add up	Use the realistic distribution in Part 4
Listing projects you weren't really leading	If you weren't accountable, don't list it
Submitting during holiday weeks	PMI staff is reduced around holidays; plan for longer review
Not saving documentation before applying	Save all certificates and transcripts in a folder first

## Quick Checklist: Before You Click Submit

- I have 36 / 60 / 24 months of leading projects (per my education path)
- My experience is from within the last 8 years
- I've completed 35 contact hours of PM education
- I have certificates for every contact-hour course
- My experience descriptions are specific (scope, role, deliverables)
- My hour distribution per project is realistic
- My verifiers are confirmed and have correct email addresses
- I've saved my education transcripts
- I'm using my legal name as it should appear on my certificate
- I've decided whether to join PMI for the member rate

## Next Steps: Testing Before July 9?

- 1 **Start the application this week.** The 4–8 week PMI review timeline means waiting longer pushes you into the new exam, which introduces AI, sustainability, and new domain weights.
- 2 **Take a 35-contact-hour PMP prep class** if you haven't already. Live online classes count and are scheduled regularly through July.
- 3 **Reply directly** if you have questions about your specific situation, eligibility, or whether your project history qualifies.

ThinkLouder runs PMP Live Prep classes in partnership with PM Training (PMI Premier Authorized Training Partner). Same instructors, same content, same credential. Live classes scheduled through the July 9 exam change.

[View PMP Class Schedule →](#)