

# The 10 Secrets to Becoming a PMP®

*Your Exam Prep Just Got Easier!*



Cornelius Fichtner, PMP, CSM

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## I'm Revealing 10 Secrets To You

Deciding to get your Project Management Professional (PMP)® credential is a big step in your career, and it can be a time-consuming and difficult journey.

**I want to make it easier for you, so here are my 10 Secrets for you.**

They are the result from teaching almost 25,000 students in preparation for their PMP Exam with [The Project Management PrepCast](#) (Disclosure: Affiliate link). They are action items, which, if you follow them, will make your exam preparation easier and less expensive.

It is, however, important to realize that the 10 Secrets will not make studying any easier or simplify passing the PMP exam. You are still going to have to study hard and stay focused. But the 10 Secrets are your step-by-step approach to preparing for and passing your PMP Exam.

I wish you all the best on your journey to becoming a certified PMP.

Cornelius Fichtner, PMP, CSM  
President, OSP International LLC

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## Secret #1: Knowledge is power!

On projects, we work with our colleagues in teams, and share knowledge as much as possible. But when it comes to getting your PMP® credential, knowledge really is power!

Everything you need to know about the process of taking the PMP exam is in the PMP Credential Handbook, which is freely available on the PMI website. It takes about 20 minutes to read and it should be the FIRST 20 minutes on your journey to becoming a certified PMP. It will answer most of your questions about the procedures of applying and taking the exam, and it contains an application checklist.

It also includes an important section on the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, which sets the standard for our profession. On your application you will have to certify that you will adhere to the Code of Ethics in your day-to-day work.

### **Take Action:**

- Download and read the PMP Credential Handbook: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmphb>
- Watch our free video series "8 Steps to becoming a PMP" on YouTube: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/8videos>



## Secret #2: Not everyone is eligible

Did you know that not everyone can take the PMP exam? Don't waste time on your application if you aren't yet eligible to take the exam. Instead, focus on what you can do to ensure that you are eligible.

To be eligible to obtain your PMP credential, you must have:

Either...

- at least 35 contact hours of project management education, relating to the knowledge areas of A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)
- a minimum of three years/36 months unique non-overlapping professional project management experience during which at least 4,500 hours were spent leading and directing project tasks (if you have a bachelor's degree or equivalent)



Or...

- a minimum of five years/60 months unique non-overlapping professional project management experience during which at least 7,500 hours were spent leading and directing project tasks (if you do not have a bachelor's degree or equivalent).

In both cases, the hours must have been accrued within the last eight years since the time of your application.

### Take Action:

- Read the PMP eligibility requirements in the PMP Credential Handbook: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmphb>
- Create a list of all your past projects. Use the "Experience Verification Worksheet": [http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/index.php?view=weblink&catid=81%3Aqualification-requirements-&id=167%3Aexperience-verification-worksheet&option=com\\_weblinks&Itemid=75](http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/index.php?view=weblink&catid=81%3Aqualification-requirements-&id=167%3Aexperience-verification-worksheet&option=com_weblinks&Itemid=75)
- Gather your training certificates to show that you have 35 contact hours. Use the Contact Hours Worksheet to keep track of the hours you already have: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/index.php/freetry-it/free-pmp-tips/exam-links?task=weblink.go&id=169>
- If you don't have 35 contact hours, then subscribe to The PM PrepCast: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)

## Secret #3: Joining PMI saves you money

As a PMI member you will receive a free *PMBOK® Guide* and a substantial discount on the PMP exam! In fact, the discount is bigger than the membership fee, so even if you don't want to stay a PMI member for life, becoming a member in your first year makes sense.

Join your local PMI Chapter as well, as most chapters offer PMP Prep Workshops and as a member you usually receive a discount that is greater than the membership fee. PMI members receive very good discounts on seminars, conferences, the PMI Global Congress, as well as other publications, products and tools that PMI sells.



### Take Action:

- Become a PMI Member:  
<http://www.pmi.org/GetInvolved/Pages/The-Benefits-and-Types-of-Membership.aspx>
- Find and become a member of your local PMI Chapter:  
<http://www.pmi.org/GetInvolved/Pages/PMI-Components-and-Communities.aspx#chapters>

## Secret #4: There are no shortcuts

Studying for the PMP exam is a serious endeavor and requires personal dedication. Manage your road to becoming a PMP like a project and create a plan - a study plan. Define how many hours you will study every day, how many chapters you will read and how many sample questions you will answer.

During your studies, be prepared for ups and downs. Some sections of the *PMBOK® Guide* will be easy for you, but there will be sections that are more difficult. Don't despair. Thousands of people have passed the exam and you can pass it, too!

Study hard but don't overdo it. You should plan on having breaks and leisure time as well.

### Take Action:

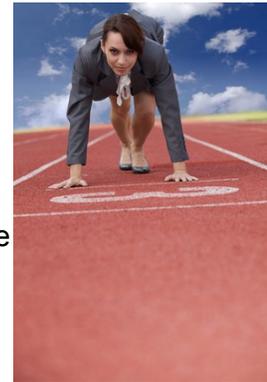
- Create your study plan. Define how many days per week and how many hours a day you will be studying.
- Follow the plan.
- If you want some help with creating your plan then take a look at The PM StudyCoach:  
<http://www.project-management-study-coach.com> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)



## Secret #5: Deadlines are great motivators!

"I want to become a PMP" is a good plan. But "I want to become a PMP and my exam date is in 3 months" is a much better plan because we all work a lot better when we have a deadline. So sign up as soon as you meet all exam criteria.

Complete your PMP Credential Application online and when you get your approval letter or email apply for the exam on the Prometric Website. There you can schedule your preferred date and location for the exam. Try to schedule the test at least six weeks in advance of the date that you would like to take it and no less than three months before your eligibility expires.



### Take Action:

- Create a list of all your past projects. Use the "Experience Verification Worksheet":  
[http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/index.php?view=weblink&catid=81%3Aqualification-requirements-&id=167%3Aexperience-verification-worksheet&option=com\\_weblinks&Itemid=75](http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/index.php?view=weblink&catid=81%3Aqualification-requirements-&id=167%3Aexperience-verification-worksheet&option=com_weblinks&Itemid=75)
- Ensure that you meet all exam prerequisites. You will find them in the PMP Credential Handbook on page 8:  
<http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmphb>
- Apply for the PMP Exam online:  
<http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmiapply>
- Schedule your PMP Exam:  
<http://www.prometric.com/PMI>

## Secret #6: The Guide has the answers

When you are studying and preparing to take the PMP exam there's one book that must be studied: A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (*PMBOK® Guide*). You should read it thoroughly at least twice. This is because about 75% of the questions on the PMP exam will come from the *PMBOK® Guide*.

It is the industry standard reference text so make sure that you go through it with a fine tooth comb. It is not meant to entertain and most people jokingly refer to it as a "sleeping pill". It can take one or two full readings to understand the concepts presented, so you may need other tools like the Project Management PrepCast to help you.



### Take Action:

- Buy and read the *PMBOK® Guide*:  
<http://www.pmprepcast.com/pmbok.html>
- Get The Project Management PrepCast and let us explain the *PMBOK® Guide* to you: <http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)

## Secret #7: ~25% of the questions won't come from the Guide

The *PMBOK® Guide* won't teach you everything. About 25% of the questions will be based on material that is not in the Guide, so you need a good PMP Preparation Workshop and a PMP Preparation Book to help with this.

You can find them on eBay, Amazon or in your local bookstore. The other benefit of these products is to help you understand the *PMBOK® Guide* because it is so "dry". They will "translate" the concepts, tools and techniques from the Guide and give you examples from everyday life to show you what is meant.



### Take Action:

- Purchase The Project Management PrepCast:  
<http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)
- Purchase Achieve PMP Exam Success *PMBOK® Guide*:  
<http://www.pmprepcast.com/outercore.html>
- See all our PMP Exam Prep Book recommendations:  
<http://www.project-management-exam-guide.com/index.php/pmp-exam-guide-reviews>

## Secret #8: Studying with others works

While you can do a lot of your studies by yourself, studying with others as part of a PMP workshop can really increase your understanding. PMI chapters, universities, colleges and training companies offer a number of classroom-based PMP workshops. They usually last from 2-6 days.

Just like the audio courses and books, the classroom training will help you understand the *PMBOK® Guide*. The benefit here is that you will have an instructor and other students to help you understand particularly difficult sections like earned value or risk from the *PMBOK® Guide*. Don't be shy about asking questions.



### Take Action:

- Add up all your past PM training hours. Do you have 35 already? If not, then you must take additional training that is related to the *PMBOK® Guide* Knowledge Areas.
- Contact your local PMI Chapter about their PMP Workshop:  
<http://www.pmi.org/GetInvolved/Pages/PMI-Components-and-Communities.aspx#chapters>
- Ensure that the trainer of your workshop is a certified PMP:  
<https://certification.pmi.org/registry.aspx>

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## Secret #9: Sample questions give you confidence

Answering PMP exam questions and taking PMP sample exams is the most important task during your studies. Like every good athlete, you have to practice what you will be tested on. And answering 200 questions in 4 hours is now your "sport". Practice makes perfect.

As you make your way through all the free samples that you find online two things will happen: First you will get used to answering exam questions, which is good. And second you will begin to disagree with some of the suggested answers, which is even better. By disagreeing and then opening up your study materials to review you will learn even more. Therefore, even the worst exam sample question that you can find can teach you how to pass the exam. It's all a matter of your personal attitude and knowing that even a bad question can take you further.



Also important: Keep track of your score. As time goes by, you will notice that you are more and more able to answer questions correctly. If you consistently answer 80% of questions that you have never seen before correctly, then you should be ready to take the exam.

### **Take Action:**

- Purchase our PM Exam Simulator:  
<http://www.pm-exam-simulator.com/> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)
- Purchase the Q&A for the *PMBOK® Guide* from PMI:  
<http://marketplace.pmi.org/Pages/ProductDetail.aspx?GMProduct=00101133801>
- Answer the free question on the following sites:
  - <http://free.pm-exam-simulator.com/>
  - <http://www.oliverlehmann.com/pmp-self-test/75-free-questions.htm>
  - <http://www.free-pm-exam-questions.com>
  - <http://www.pmzilla.com>

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## Secret #10: You can beat exam day stress

After all that hard work, taking the exam almost sounds like the easy part. But there are a few things to consider that will help you to make this a good and successful experience for you.

Try to get a good night's sleep the night before the exam. Being refreshed and having slept enough is important. A lot of people choose to take the day of the actual exam off work. You can sleep in, eat a good breakfast, go for a walk and relax, which are all ways to beat nerves on the day. It is also a good idea to drive to the testing center a week before, so that you know where it is.

Make sure you pack everything you need including earplugs in case it is noisy. During the exam itself be sure to take the tutorial.

### **Take Action:**

- Take off from work on the day of your exam
- Practice your journey to get to the test center
- Take a deep breath...



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## Secret #11: Bonus Secret - It doesn't end here!

Congratulations! You are a PMP as soon as you pass the exam, even though it can take up to three weeks for your name to appear in the online registry.

However, you are not a PMP for life. Every 3 years you will need to collect and claim Professional Development Units (PDUs) to keep the certification active. If you don't meet the guidelines as outlined in the Continuing Certification Requirements within the timeframe, then you'll lose your PMP status.

But don't worry too much. Gaining PDUs is easy. You can gain them by attending your local PMI chapter dinner meeting, by volunteering for PMI or by attending seminars offered by PMI's Registered Education Providers. You can also claim a maximum of 30 PDUs in 3 years just by listening to podcasts.

Every PDU that you claim online at the PMI website must be documented. So make sure that you have a good "bookkeeping" and that you keep all information regarding your PDUs.

### **Take Action:**

- Check your name in the Online PMP Registry:  
<https://certification.pmi.org/registry.aspx>
- Learn about PDUs with our free newsletter:  
<http://www.pdu-insider.com>
- Read about the Continuing Certification Requirements in the PMP Handbook:  
<http://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmphb>
- Earn 30 free PDUs from The Project Management Podcast:  
<http://www.pm-podcast.com/pdu>
- Earn 1 PDU every month by watching videos on your tablet or phone:  
<http://www.pducast.com> (Disclosure: Affiliate link)
- Listen to project management podcasts:
  - <http://www.project-management-podcast.com>
  - <http://www.thepmopodcast.com>
  - <http://www.peopleandprojectspodcast.com/>



## Our Range of PMP Preparation Products

Product	Description and links to the website
	<p><b><a href="#">A complete Video Podcast for the PMP Exam*</a></b></p> <p>The PM PrepCast™ is a PMP Exam Prep Video Workshop that you watch on your laptop, tablet or smartphone. This gives you the freedom to study for the exam wherever and whenever you want. It is a complete PMP exam study approach that increases your chance of passing the PMP Exam. It will shorten your study time because it keeps you focused and you don't have to read dozens of other books to prepare. Watch over 40 hours of video from The PM PrepCast and you'll be ready to tackle the exam. <a href="#">Read More...</a>*</p>
	<p><b><a href="#">Practice on 1,800 realistic sample questions*</a></b></p> <p>The PM Exam Simulator™ gives you an "insider's view" of the actual PMP Exam. With this Project Management Institute (PMI)® Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.) approved exam simulator, you have the opportunity to practice on 1,800 highly realistic PMP Exam sample questions based on the current <i>PMBOK® Guide</i>. Practice "like real" with the 90-day access as often as you want. Read detailed explanations alongside all answers and learn why your answer was / was not correct. Practice and learn effective test taking strategies with The PM Exam Simulator and pass the PMP Exam on your first try! <a href="#">Read more...</a>*</p>
	<p><b><a href="#">All the formulas you need for the PMP Exam*</a></b></p> <p>The PMP Exam Formula Study Guide™ and Cheat Sheet is a complete approach to the PMP Exam formulas, values, and acronyms and you even get sample questions to test yourself on. It's your reference to all the math that you need to know in order to pass the PMP Exam. You will receive more than just a list of the bare bones formulas as they are usually presented in PMP prep books and on free PMP prep websites. We'll explain the formulas, the concepts behind them and you'll learn how to interpret the results. And the 90-page PDF document with 105 Free PMP Exam Questions then allows you to practice this deep understanding. Our Formula Study Guide contains the correct formulas and it is the authoritative source. <a href="#">Read More...</a>*</p>

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USA - Silverado, CA 92676  
Email: [info@osp-international.com](mailto:info@osp-international.com)  
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