

Project Manager interview checklist

Project manager hiring usually runs as an HR screen, one or two rounds with a delivery head or programme manager that include a case on a delayed or troubled project, sometimes a client or stakeholder round, and a final HR discussion.

10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

1. What is the difference between a project, a programme and a portfolio?

What it checks: Whether you know the basic vocabulary of project management and understand how individual projects connect to business goals above them.

2. Tell me about a time two senior stakeholders wanted conflicting things from your project.

What it checks: Whether you can manage conflict between powerful people by using facts and the agreed objectives, without taking sides or escalating too early.

3. Do you hold a PMP, PRINCE2 or similar certification, and how has it changed the way you work?

What it checks: Whether your certification reflects real practice and whether you can apply frameworks sensibly rather than reciting them.

4. How do you find the critical path of a project, and what does float tell you?

What it checks: Whether you can actually schedule a project using a network diagram, not just name the term, and understand which tasks can slip.

5. Describe a time you had to tell a client that a milestone would be missed.

What it checks: Whether you deliver bad news early and honestly, with a recovery plan, rather than hiding problems until the deadline.

6. What are your salary expectations for this project manager position?

What it checks: Whether you have a clear, reasoned number linked to the scope of the role, and whether you can discuss it calmly.

7. A client keeps asking for small additions to the scope. How do you handle scope creep?

What it checks: Whether you protect scope through a clear change process while staying helpful to the client, rather than saying yes to everything or refusing everything.

8. How did you handle a team member who repeatedly missed deadlines on your project?

What it checks: Whether you address performance issues directly and fairly, find the cause, and protect delivery without public blame.

9. How will you hand over your current projects if you join us, and how soon can you start?

What it checks: Whether you will leave your current employer responsibly, which tells the interviewer how you would treat their projects too.

10. How do you build a work breakdown structure and estimate effort for a new project?

What it checks: Whether you plan from deliverables down to work packages and use more than one estimation technique, involving the people who will do the work.

TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

- Prepare two project stories in detail: one that went well and one that went wrong, with numbers for budget, team size, schedule and outcome.

- Revise critical path, earned value, risk responses and change control, because case rounds often ask you to calculate or apply them on the spot.
- Bring a sanitised sample of your status report, RAID log or project plan, with client names removed, to show how you actually work.
- Be ready to explain how you tailor process to project size, since interviewers distrust candidates who apply heavy documentation to every project.

THE DAY BEFORE

- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave