PMP vs CSM: which certification is better for your career?

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Short answer: they certify different jobs. **PMP** from PMI is for experienced project managers who plan and control projects of any kind, and it requires several years of experience. **CSM** from Scrum Alliance is an entry-level Scrum certification you can earn after a 16-hour course. If you manage projects, aim for PMP; if you work in or facilitate a Scrum team, start with CSM.

TL;DR The short version

- PMP and CSM certify different jobs: PMP is for experienced project managers, and CSM is an entry-level Scrum certification earned after a 16-hour course.
- PMP is far harder to get and requires several years of experience; many software project managers hold both.
- From 1 December 2026 PMI counts live classes towards PMP training hours only from authorised providers.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/pmp-vs-csm-which-is-better

	PMP (PMI)	CSM (SCRUM ALLIANCE)
Who it is for	Experienced project managers	Scrum team members and Scrum Masters
Experience required	Bachelor's degree + 3 years, or high-school diploma + 5 years (PMI also lists other routes)	None stated; you take a course
Training required	35 hours	16-hour course with a Certified Scrum Trainer
Exam	180 questions, 240 minutes	50 questions, 37 correct to pass
Renewal	PDUs over a three-year cycle	SEUs every two years

PMI facts read on pmi.org 20 October 2026; Scrum Alliance facts read 20 November 2026.

Which is harder to get?

PMP, by a wide margin. It needs years of documented project experience, 35 hours of training and a 240-minute exam. CSM can be earned in a few days by someone new to Scrum. That difference is the point: they sit at different stages of a career.

Do you need both?

Many project managers in software organisations hold both, because their projects mix predictive planning with Scrum teams. If that is your situation, CSM is the quick first step and PMP the longer goal. See agile vs waterfall vs hybrid for how the two approaches combine.

A note for technical project managers

PMP covers project management in general, and CSM covers Scrum. Neither tests the technical judgement a technical project manager uses every day: reading an architecture, weighing technical debt, understanding a deployment pipeline. IICTP's Certified Technical Practitioner (CTP) is built for that: 150 scenario questions in 180 minutes across architecture, delivery, applied AI, infrastructure and leadership. See PMP and CTP eligibility side by side.

PMI changes from 1 December 2026

PMI's PMP page says that from 1 December 2026, live classes count towards the 35 training hours only if they come from a PMI Authorized Training Partner, a China REP or an accredited higher-education programme. Check this before you book a course.

> Facts about Scrum Alliance, Scrum.org and Scaled Agile were read on their own websites on 20 November 2026; facts about PMI were read on pmi.org on 20 October 2026. Issuers change exams and rules, so check their pages before you book.

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Sources and further reading

1. PMI. Project Management Professional (PMP). pmi.org/certifications/project-management-pmp. Read 20 October 2026.
2. PMI. Maintain your certification. pmi.org/certifications/certification-resources/maintain. Read 20 October 2026.
3. Scrum Alliance. Certified ScrumMaster (CSM). scrumalliance.org/get-certified/scrum-master-track/certified-scrummaster. Read 20 November 2026.
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