Crashing and fast-tracking

Shorten a schedule without cutting scope: choose between more resources and more overlap, knowing what each costs and risks.

QUESTION	CRASHING	FAST-TRACKING
What you do	Add people, overtime or money	Overlap activities planned in sequence
What it costs	Extra money per day saved	Rework risk, more coordination
Works only if	More people make it faster	The link is soft, not hard
Which first	The cheapest day saved	The least risky overlap
Watch for	A new critical path	Changes that undo work done

The series' own comparison, after Kerzner (pp. 620–622) and the PMBOK® Guide 8 (PMI's body-of-knowledge guide) (pp. 196–197).

WHAT IT IS

The PMBOK® Guide calls both **schedule compression**. **Crashing** adds people, overtime or money to critical activities; Harold Kerzner's order is the lowest cost per unit of time first, with the paths rechecked after each step, since a new critical path can appear. **Fast-tracking** overlaps activities planned in sequence: little extra money, but rework risk. The ICB4 (IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline) names crashing.

HOW IT WORKS

01 Confirm the gap, and which date is really fixed.

02 Crash: extra cost ÷ days saved; the cheapest critical day first.

03 Fast-track: overlap only soft links; price the rework.

04 Recheck the paths after each step. Scope or date: the sponsor.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team moving parking permits online must win back four working days before a fixed go-live. Configuration and testing are on the critical path.

The service-desk guide has spare time, so speeding it up gains nothing. Weekend work saves 2 days of configuration for €3,000 (€1,500 a day); a second tester saves 2 days for €5,000 (€2,500 a day). Cheaper first, then the other: 4 days for €8,000.

In the exam: Show the critical activities, the cost per day saved, the cheapest choice and the recheck of the paths. Name each option's risk and your fallback.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city joins 14 online services under one login in 30 months. One wave of services will miss the national login's quarterly release window by two weeks.

Waiting would cost up to three months. The project manager weighs borrowing shared integration specialists (the portfolio meeting decides), overlapping build and test, or moving one service to the next wave, and takes the options to the board.

In the exam: Treat compression as a board trade-off: cost, risk, people's load and other projects. Say who decides, and when a scope or date change is better.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · *PMBOK® GUIDE* 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.5.4: crashing the schedule in the element's knowledge; re-planning after disturbances (4.5.4.5)	Guide: schedule compression by crashing and fast tracking; negative float (pp. 196–197). Exam outline: Domain II, task 8	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §5.5.1: the critical path is reviewed constantly. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) 20c: re-estimating and schedule optimisation

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); Kerzner, Project Management: A Systems Approach (11th ed.); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)