

Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Your ServSafe Manager Certification

Everything in order, from "do I even need this" to "certificate in hand."

1 Confirm you actually need it

Not every food service role requires Manager-level certification — some only require a Food Handler card. Check your state, local health department, and your employer's specific requirement before you spend money on the wrong exam.

2 Decide how you'll study

You've got options: a self-paced online course, an in-person class, an app, or a plain old study guide. There's no wrong answer — it depends on how you learn best and how much time you have. ([See our Study Options guide for the full breakdown.](#))

3 Study the material

The exam covers food safety basics: time & temperature control, cross-contamination, allergens, cleaning vs. sanitizing, and safe food handling practices. Give yourself real prep time — this isn't a skim-it-the-night-before exam.

4 Create a ServSafe account and get your exam voucher

Before you can schedule anything, you'll need a free account at [servsafe.com](#) and an exam voucher — the access code that actually lets you sit the exam. You can buy a voucher on its own (exam-only) or bundled with a study course, depending on how you answered Step 2. Hang onto that voucher code; you'll need it to register.

5 Register and schedule your exam with a proctor

Here's the part people don't expect: every ServSafe Manager exam — no exceptions — has to be taken under the supervision of a registered ServSafe Proctor, whether in person or online. ([See our Do I Need a Proctor? guide.](#)) Use our free Find a Proctor directory to find one near you or one who proctors online.

6 Take the exam

The exam is 90 multiple-choice questions — 80 scored (the other 10 are unscored pilot questions mixed in, so you won't know which is which). You'll need at least 56 of those 80 correct — a 70% score — to pass. Plan for roughly two hours, though your proctor will confirm the exact time allowed.

7 Get your results and certificate

Online exams typically show your pass/fail result right away; paper exams may take a bit longer to process. Once you pass, your official certificate becomes available through your ServSafe account. If you don't pass, you can retake it — you'll just need a new exam voucher.

8 Mark your calendar

Your certification is valid for 5 years from your pass date. Set a reminder now — renewing means retaking the course and exam before it expires, so you're not scrambling (or working uncertified) later.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirmed I actually need Manager-level certification
- ☐ Picked a study method
- ☐ Studied the material
- ☐ Created a ServSafe account and bought my exam voucher
- ☐ Found a proctor and registered for my exam
- ☐ Took the exam
- ☐ Got my certificate
- ☐ Set a renewal reminder for 5 years out

Need a proctor for your exam?

Search our free directory to find one near you — or one who proctors online.
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