

ServSafe Manager Exam Blueprint

The 7 domains and 21 tasks the exam is written from · 2026 edition · foodsafeprep.com

The ServSafe Manager exam is not written chapter by chapter out of a textbook. It is written from a published blueprint: seven content domains, split into twenty-one tasks, each carrying a fixed share of the paper. That is useful for one very practical reason — if you know the weights, you know where your study hours should go, and you know which mistakes cost the most marks.

The seven domains at a glance

DOMAIN	WEIGHT	TASKS INSIDE IT
Providing Safe Food	13%	Contaminants, Pathogens & Growth, TCS & Risk
The Safe Food Handler	14%	Handwashing, Health & Illness, Gloves & Habits
Cross-Contamination	15%	Receiving & Storage, Allergens, Utensils & Surfaces
Time & Temperature	20%	Cooking & Holding, Cooling & Thawing, Checks & Records
Cleaning & Sanitizing	12%	Warewashing, Chemicals, Schedules & Surfaces
Facilities & Equipment	11%	Water & Plumbing, Surfaces & Equipment, Pest Control
Food Safety Management	15%	HACCP & Systems, Managerial Control, Recalls & Oversight

Two things stand out. Cross-contamination and Managerial Control together are more than a third of the paper, and they are the two domains people study least, because they feel like common sense rather than numbers. Meanwhile the temperature material you probably memorised first is spread across several domains rather than concentrated in one.

Task by task

The twenty-one tasks are the level at which questions are actually authored. A question is not tagged "Chapter 5" — it is tagged to one task, and the task tells you what kind of judgement it is testing.

Providing Safe Food — 13% of the paper

Contamination, pathogens, TCS food and allergens

- **Contaminants** — Biological, chemical and physical contamination
- **Pathogens & Growth** — Bacteria, viruses, parasites and what they need
- **TCS & Risk** — TCS food, allergens, high-risk guests, advisories

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 12 questions.

The Safe Food Handler — 14% of the paper

Handwashing, health, gloves and personal habits

- **Handwashing** — When, where and how hands must be washed
- **Health & Illness** — Reporting, exclusion and high-risk populations
- **Gloves & Habits** — Glove use, wounds, jewellery, personal habits

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 13 questions.

Cross-Contamination — 15% of the paper

Storage order, allergens, separating equipment

- **Receiving & Storage** — Suppliers, rejection, storage order, date marks
- **Allergens** — The Big Nine, cross-contact and guest questions
- **Utensils & Surfaces** — Cutting boards, utensils, separating tasks

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 14 questions.

Time & Temperature — 20% of the paper

Cooking, cooling, holding, thawing, checks

- **Cooking & Holding** — Minimum internal temperatures, hot and cold holding
- **Cooling & Thawing** — Cooling curves, thawing methods, frozen food
- **Checks & Records** — Thermometers, calibration, date marking

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 18 questions.

Cleaning & Sanitizing — 12% of the paper

Warewashing, chemicals and cleaning schedules

- **Warewashing** — Three-compartment sink and dish machines
- **Chemicals** — Sanitisers, storage, labelling, safety data sheets
- **Schedules & Surfaces** — Cleaning schedules, food-contact surfaces, tools

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 11 questions.

Facilities & Equipment — 11% of the paper

Plumbing, surfaces, ventilation and pests

- **Water & Plumbing** — Potable water, backflow, cross-connections
- **Surfaces & Equipment** — Floors, walls, ventilation, repairs, standards
- **Pest Control** — Integrated pest management and pesticides

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 10 questions.

Food Safety Management — 15% of the paper

HACCP, active managerial control, recalls

- **HACCP & Systems** — Food safety plans, prerequisite programmes, records
- **Managerial Control** — Oversight, corrective action, food defence
- **Recalls & Oversight** — Recalls, supplier approval, regulatory contact

On a 90-question paper this domain is worth roughly 14 questions.

Turning the weights into a study plan

- **Rank your domains, not your chapters.** Score yourself per domain, then spend time in proportion to weight x weakness, not in proportion to how difficult the chapter felt.
- **Treat 20% as a fifth of your study time.** Managerial Control and Cross-Contamination deserve roughly one hour in every five you sit down.
- **Re-check the low-weight domains last.** The 11–12% domains are where marks quietly leak, because people stop revising them once they feel familiar.
- **Numbers are cheaper marks than judgement.** Temperature and time questions are answerable with recall; scenario questions are not. Bank the recall, then practise the scenarios.

What the blueprint does not tell you

It does not tell you the wording of the questions, and it does not tell you how many of each task appear on your particular paper. The published task list is the stable part; the sampling is not. Use it to allocate effort, not to predict questions.

How to use this sheet

Print it. Keep one column for your practice scores per domain. When a domain with a 15% weight is sitting at 60% accuracy and a domain with an 11% weight is at 90%, the next hour of study has already been decided for you.

FoodSafe Prep — free ServSafe Manager exam trainer. Blueprint weights are the widely published 2026 figures (13 / 14 / 15 / 20 / 12 / 11 / 15). Generated 2026-10-12. Not affiliated with, endorsed by, or sponsored by the National Restaurant Association or ServSafe. Always confirm current numbers against your own edition of the course material.