



Evaluation Handbook

Product Certification under the PM Procedure

Publisher

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Foreword

Purchasing decisions in e-commerce rest largely on information supplied by the seller. Product presentation, advertising claims and reviews are difficult for consumers to verify and rarely comparable across products. Independent testing against fixed criteria closes this gap: it makes quality measurable and results comparable.

The PM procedure was developed by the Centre for Qualified Purchasing Decisions. It defines test parameters, evaluation standards, weighting and documentation uniformly for every test: ten test parameters in three weighted evaluation areas, 300 points, one scoring key for all categories. Every step is recorded — and not just the overall grade, but every individual measurement is published. Any summary loses information; whether a product suits a given purpose is for the reader to judge from the individual values.

To date, more than 500 tests have been conducted and published under this procedure — each individually accessible and retrievable via the licence number on the seal. Around 90,000 readers a month use the reports for their purchasing research. Testing is carried out by an interdisciplinary team drawn from purchasing, retail, e-commerce and engineering: the buyer assesses the manufacturing, the retailer knows the reasons for returns, the product manager tests against the advertised purpose, and the engineer turns all of this into a repeatable measurement.

Consumers thus receive a transparent basis for their decisions; manufacturers receive credible proof that cannot be bought, along with concrete starting points for product improvement.

This handbook documents the procedure in full: the evaluation areas and test parameters, the evaluation process, the scoring scheme with weighting and grading scale, and the rules governing publication, certification and quality assurance.

1. Introduction

Principles of the PM Procedure

The evaluation process follows a fixed methodology: defined test criteria and evaluation areas, standardised test execution, documented scoring and weighting, and ongoing quality assurance. Four principles follow from this:

- **Objectivity:** Standardised procedures and independently working examiners.
- **Transparency:** Complete documentation and disclosure of all evaluation criteria and results.
- **Comparability:** One uniform scoring key for all products and categories.
- **Reliability:** Regular review of the procedure and continuous qualification of the testers.

Independence of the Evaluation

The result cannot be bought. The testing fee is charged regardless of the outcome — it compensates the testing effort, not the grade. Influencing the verdict is therefore structurally impossible. Once determined, a result is final and will not be adjusted retroactively.

The examiners have no financial stake in the outcome of a test and disclose any conflicts of interest before taking on an assignment. Every test step and every partial result is subject to mandatory recording; the test record forms the basis of the test report and the certification decision.

Status of the PM Standard

Prüfmagazin certifies products under its own PM Standard. This is a private certification based on transparent, published test criteria — not an official governmental inspection and not a state-accredited conformity assessment.

Product Selection

Products reach testing in two ways: manufacturers and retailers submit products for evaluation. In addition, the editorial team tests independently of manufacturers — products are purchased at retail and evaluated under the same PM Standard. Editorial selection follows consumer suggestions and the team's own market observation.

2. Evaluation Areas and Test Parameters

Every verdict is composed of ten test parameters, grouped into three evaluation areas. Together, the areas cover all relevant dimensions of quality and performance; the structure makes the evaluation systematic and traceable.

The Three Evaluation Areas

- **Product-Specific Properties:** Physical and design-related characteristics: material quality, workmanship, size, weight and design.
- **Use and Safety:** Functionality and safety in practical use, including usability, suitability and protective features.
- **Opinion and Service:** Perception and accompanying aspects of the product: advertising claims, consumer opinion, packaging and labelling, and value for money.

Overview: Areas, Parameters and Scope

Evaluation Area	Test Parameter	Scope
Product-Specific Properties	Quality & Workmanship	Material quality and standard of manufacture
	Size & Weight	Accuracy of stated dimensions and ergonomic suitability
	Design	Aesthetic impact and visual appearance
Use and Safety	Functionality	Performance, reliability and efficiency
	Handling & Suitability	Usability, ergonomics and fitness for purpose
	Safety	Safety features and risk potential
Opinion and Service	Advertising Claims	Comparison of advertised properties with test results
	Consumer Opinion	Analysis of user feedback and reviews
	Packaging & Labelling	Packaging design and information labelling
	Value for Money	Price relative to quality and function in a competitive comparison

3. Evaluation Process

Four elements are fixed for every test parameter: its relevance to the overall evaluation, the focus of the test, the individual criteria of the assessment methodology, and the scoring standard. A product receives full points only if it meets all individual criteria of a parameter without defects; the overall impression of quality is always determined by the weakest component.

Test Sequence and Handling of Test Samples

- **Receipt:** Completeness, packaging and labelling of the test sample are checked and documented.
- **Testing:** Every test sample undergoes the same standardised everyday test against the ten parameters of this handbook.
- **Recording:** Examiners with subject expertise in the respective category document all partial results in the test record.
- **Retention of Test Samples:** Test samples are not returned to the client after the test. They remain with Prüfmagazin under documentation or are disposed of in a documented manner — ruling out any subsequent alteration of the tested sample.

Scoring: Uniform Deduction Logic

A single deduction logic applies to all test parameters. Deviating scales are stated where they apply, for the parameters Consumer Opinion and Value for Money.

Level	Condition
full points	The product meets all criteria of the test parameter without any identifiable defects.
–10 %	Minor deviations, visible only on close inspection; no effect on use or service life.
–20 %	Slight, visible defects without material effect on function, use or safety.
–40 %	Clear defects that impair use in certain situations; basic function is preserved.
–60 %	Serious defects that significantly restrict use.
–80 %	Critical defects; the product remains usable only to a limited extent.
0 points	Deficiencies that render the product unusable or pose a hazard.

a) Product-Specific Properties

Product-specific properties comprise the physical and design characteristics of a product — the attributes that largely determine perceived value, service life and overall impression.

Test Parameter: Quality and Workmanship

Quality and workmanship largely determine a product's value and lifespan. High-grade materials and precise manufacture translate into greater durability and a lower susceptibility to defects.

Test focus: Material quality and standard of manufacture — whether the product withstands everyday stress and retains its function over time.

Individual criteria:

- **Material quality:** Robustness, durability and suitability of the materials for the intended purpose.
- **Workmanship:** Standard of manufacture — from seams and joints to surface finish and panel gaps.
- **Durability:** Stress tests and simulated usage scenarios assessing long-term resistance to wear.
- **Precision:** Symmetry, fit and manufacturing tolerances.

Test Parameter: Size and Weight

Size and weight affect handling, storage and transport. A well-dimensioned product improves usability directly.

Test focus: Physical dimensions and weight — whether the manufacturer's specifications are accurate and the product meets the demands of its intended use.

Individual criteria:

- **Measurement accuracy:** Verification of the stated dimensions and weights.
- **Ergonomics:** Effect of size and weight on handling and use.
- **Compatibility:** Suitability for typical conditions of use.
- **Transportability:** Ease of transport and storage.

Test Parameter: Design

Design shapes the first visual impression and the user's identification with the product. Colour and form are assessed as the principal carriers of perception.

Test focus: Aesthetic characteristics including colour and form — whether colours match the product imagery, whether polarising colours irritate in use, and whether the styling observes applicable standards.

Individual criteria:

- **Colour scheme:** Consistency with the product imagery; no irritating or polarising colours.
- **Form:** Compliance with standards and degree of innovation.
- **Innovation:** Distinctive design elements that set the product apart.
- **Visual harmony:** Aesthetic coherence of colours, forms and materials.

b) Use and Safety

This area assesses everyday usability and safety. A good product performs its functions not only reliably, but also safely and intuitively.

Test Parameter: Functionality

Functionality directly shapes satisfaction and the user experience. A product must perform its intended tasks reliably under varying conditions.

Test focus: Fulfilment of the intended functions — performance, reliability and efficiency in actual operation.

Individual criteria:

- **Performance:** Product performance under normal operating conditions.
- **Reliability:** Consistency of performance over a defined period.
- **Efficiency:** Fulfilment of function with minimal use of resources.
- **Versatility:** Fulfilment of function under varying conditions and applications.

Test Parameter: Handling & Suitability

Ease of handling and a high degree of suitability for the intended applications are decisive for a product's practical usability.

Test focus: Usability, ergonomics and versatility, as well as suitability for the target group's requirements — tested across a range of usage scenarios.

Individual criteria:

- **Usability:** Practical tests with different user groups assessing intuitive operation and ergonomics.
- **Ergonomics:** Analysis of the design with regard to comfort and ease of operation.
- **Versatility:** Adaptability and suitability for different applications.
- **Reliability and performance:** Stress and function tests under differing conditions.

Test Parameter: Safety

Safety directly concerns the health of the user. For electrical devices, toys and household items in particular, the safety assessment is indispensable.

Test focus: Identification of potential hazards and assessment of protective mechanisms — under normal and exceptional operating conditions, including compliance with relevant safety standards.

Individual criteria:

- **Mechanical safety:** Checks for sharp edges, loose parts and stability.
- **Electrical safety:** Insulation, overheating protection and electrical components.
- **Chemical safety:** Possible pollutant emissions and use of safe materials.
- **Warnings and instructions:** Clarity and completeness of safety instructions and warnings.

c) Opinion and Service

This area looks at perception and the aspects surrounding the product: whether advertising claims hold up against reality, how users experience the product in everyday life, and whether price, packaging and labelling are appropriate.

Test Parameter: Advertising Claims

Credible advertising claims are the foundation of consumer trust. Misleading or exaggerated claims disappoint customers and may carry legal consequences.

Test focus: Comparison of the advertised properties and performance with the actual test results — whether the communicated benefits prove verifiable in real use.

Individual criteria:

- **Fulfilment of claims:** Comparison of advertised properties with the test results.
- **Transparency and clarity:** Comprehensibility and accuracy of the advertising claims.
- **Consistency:** Absence of contradictions across all advertising materials (packaging, online listing, brochures).
- **Verifiability:** Whether the claims can be substantiated by objective testing.

Test Parameter: Consumer Opinion

Consumer opinion reflects the actual user experience. It captures everyday observations that complement standardised testing and round out the overall picture.

Test focus: Systematic analysis of feedback and reviews from real users across platforms — customer satisfaction, recurring points of criticism and highlighted strengths.

Individual criteria:

- **Customer satisfaction:** Overall satisfaction based on ratings and reviews.
- **Frequency of praise and criticism:** Analysis of the most common positive and negative comments.
- **Recurring problems:** Identification of defects mentioned repeatedly.
- **Recommendation rate:** Share of users who would recommend the product.

Deviating scoring standard: Scoring is based on the average star rating of marketplace reviews. The following conversion key applies:

Points/Deduction	Star Rating	Points/Deduction	Star Rating
full points	up to 4.9 stars	–60 %	up to 3.7 stars
–10 %	up to 4.7 stars	–70 %	up to 3.5 stars
–20 %	up to 4.5 stars	–80 %	up to 3.3 stars
–30 %	up to 4.3 stars	–90 %	up to 3.1 stars
–40 %	up to 4.1 stars	0 points	≤ 3.0 stars
–50 %	up to 3.9 stars		

Test Parameter: Packaging and Labelling

Packaging protects the product and conveys essential information. Clear, complete labelling is a precondition for safe handling of the product.

Test focus: Packaging design as well as clarity and completeness of labelling — physical robustness, material quality, environmental compatibility and the legally required information.

Individual criteria:

- **Robustness of the packaging:** Stability and protective function during transport.
- **Material quality:** Durability and environmental compatibility of the packaging materials.
- **Clarity and completeness of labelling:** Complete, comprehensible mandatory information, instructions and warnings.
- **Environmental compatibility:** Sustainability and recyclability.
- **Design and aesthetics:** Appealing, informative presentation.

Test Parameter: Value for Money

Value for money is often the consumer's principal purchasing criterion. A product justifies its price through demonstrable benefit.

Test focus: Price relative to performance, quality and range of functions — compared against similar products in the competitive environment.

Individual criteria:

- **Cost comparison:** Price comparison with similar products on the market.
- **Benefit analysis:** Actual benefit and advantages offered.
- **Quality assessment:** Do quality and longevity justify the price?
- **Functionality assessment:** Functions offered relative to cost.
- **Consumer feedback:** Users' perception of value for money.

Deviating scoring standard: Scoring follows a matrix that relates product quality to price (example based on 30 points for this parameter):

Quality \ Price	cheapest	cheap	average	expensive	most expensive
Very good	30	27	24	21	15
Good	27	24	21	18	12
Satisfactory	24	21	18	15	9
Adequate	21	18	15	12	6
Poor	15	12	9	6	0

4. Scoring and Weighting

Scoring and Grading Scale

Evaluation uses a grading scale from 1.0 to 5.0, with 1.0 being the best grade (following the German school grading convention). A total of 300 points is distributed across the ten test parameters; the points achieved are converted into a percentage and an overall grade.

Overall Grade	Percentage	Points (of 300)	Rating
1.0 – 1.2	100 – 95 %	300 – 285	excellent
1.3 – 1.7	94 – 85 %	284 – 255	very good
1.8 – 2.4	84 – 75 %	254 – 225	good
2.5 – 3.4	74 – 65 %	224 – 195	satisfactory
3.5 – 5.0	64 – 0 %	194 – 0	poor

Certification threshold: Certification is granted from a fulfilment level of 75 per cent — at least 225 of 300 points, corresponding to the rating “good”. Below this threshold, the product counts as tested but is not certified (see Chapter 5).

Weighting of the Test Parameters

Not every criterion carries equal weight. The weighting reflects how strongly a characteristic determines fitness for use. In individual product categories the weightings may be adjusted — always on the premise that the overall system remains at 300 points. Category-specific characteristics can thus be accommodated without compromising the comparability of the final results.

Evaluation Area	Test Parameter	Points	Overall Weighting
Product-Specific Properties (100 points · 33.3 %)	Quality & Workmanship	50	16.7 %
	Size & Weight	30	10.0 %
	Design	20	6.7 %
Use and Safety (120 points · 40.0 %)	Functionality	40	13.3 %
	Handling & Suitability	40	13.3 %
	Safety	40	13.3 %
Opinion and Service (80 points · 26.7 %)	Advertising Claims	15	5.0 %
	Consumer Opinion	20	6.7 %
	Packaging & Labelling	15	5.0 %
	Value for Money	30	10.0 %

Calculating the Overall Grade

The overall grade results from the sum of all point scores across the three evaluation areas. Every test parameter contributes to the final grade according to its weighting. Regardless of category-specific adjustments, the maximum score is always 300 points — guaranteeing the comparability of all evaluations.

Worked Example

- **Product-Specific Properties:** 82 of 100 points (Quality & Workmanship 40/50 · Size & Weight 27/30 · Design 15/20)
- **Use and Safety:** 96 of 120 points
- **Opinion and Service:** 60 of 80 points

Total: $82 + 96 + 60 = 238$ of 300 points — a fulfilment level of 79.3 %, corresponding to a **grade of 2.2** (“good”). The certification threshold of 225 points is met; certification is granted.

5. Documentation, Publication and Certification

Preparation of the Test Reports

Every report documents the tests performed, the methods applied and the results in a structured form that remains accessible to non-specialist readers. A test report comprises:

- **Introduction:** Overview of the tested product and the purpose of the evaluation.
- **Methodology:** Description of the test procedures and evaluation approach.
- **Results:** Presentation of the outcome for every test parameter.
- **Overall grade:** Summary of the overall evaluation, taking the weightings into account.
- **Recommendations:** Guidance for consumers and suggestions for improvement addressed to the manufacturer.

Disclosure of Test Criteria and Results

All evaluation standards and results are disclosed: the test criteria are published in this handbook, and the test results — including every partial result — are publicly accessible and retrievable via the licence number.

Publication of the Test Report

Every evaluated product counts as tested. The test report is published regardless of the outcome and remains accessible for the duration of the licence period, unless the client withdraws the publication. Once determined, a result is not adjusted retroactively; a revised product may be resubmitted for testing.

Certification with Test Seal and Overall Grade

Certification is granted exclusively to products that reach the certification threshold of 75 per cent (225 of 300 points, rating “good” or better). Products below the threshold count as tested and are published, but receive neither a certificate nor a test seal. Certification comprises:

- **Test seal:** A visual quality seal with its own licence number, available in multiple languages on request. It may be used on the product and in accompanying communication.
- **Test report:** A report published in Prüfmagazin containing all individual scores — the citable source behind the seal.
- **Test record:** The complete documentation of all partial results, provided to the client.
- **Citable source:** Every seal carries an individual licence number. It leads directly to the full test report via the licence search — the source of the verdict is thus unambiguously assigned and easily accessible to anyone.

Licence and Validity

- **Term:** Test seal and certificate are tied to a licence with a defined term.
- **Validity:** The licence remains valid as long as the product remains unchanged and the licence itself is in force.

- **Product changes:** If the product is modified, the result loses its validity; a new test is required.
- **After expiry:** After the licence expires or lapses, the seal may no longer be used. The test report remains published within the licence period, unless the client withdraws the publication.

6. Quality Assurance

Review and Refinement of the PM Procedure

- **Regular reviews:** At defined intervals, criteria and test methods are evaluated against new scientific findings and technological developments.
- **Adjustments and updates:** Findings feed directly into the further development of the testing standard.
- **Feedback integration:** Feedback from product testers, manufacturers and consumers is systematically collected and incorporated.

Training and Development of the Product Testers

- **Induction training:** New testers are familiarised with the evaluation standards of the PM procedure and the specific test methods.
- **Continuing education:** Ongoing training covering theoretical foundations and practical application.
- **Exchange and workshops:** Moderated formats ensure consistent evaluation and develop best practices.

7. Concluding Remarks

The PM procedure is a standardised, traceable evaluation process. It defines ten test parameters in three weighted evaluation areas, discloses the scoring standards and point distribution, and consolidates all partial results into one comparable overall grade. The certification threshold of 75 per cent separates tested products from certified ones; publication and disclosure apply equally to both.

Scope and Limits of Validity

A result is credible also because it states what it does not claim. The following applies to every verdict under the PM procedure:

- **Snapshot in time:** What is measured is the condition of the test sample during the test period. Long-term or endurance testing over years is not part of the procedure — which is why every seal states the test period.
- **Functional, user-oriented testing:** The tests are practice-oriented everyday assessments against fixed criteria. They are not accredited laboratory tests and do not replace legally required conformity procedures.
- **Guidance, not a substitute for judgement:** The overall grade condenses ten parameters according to a disclosed key. Whether a product suits an individual purpose is for the reader to decide — which is why all individual scores are published.
- **Scope:** What is tested is what is submitted or editorially selected. A missing seal says nothing about a product — only that no test has taken place.

Continuous quality assurance — regular review of the procedure and ongoing qualification of the testers — keeps the evaluation standards current and dependable. The PM procedure thus offers consumers a solid basis for their decisions and manufacturers verifiable proof of quality — built on transparent, publicly accessible criteria and a clear awareness of its own limits.

Revision History

Version	As of	Key Changes
6	August 2026	Grading scale consolidated to five levels (1.0–5.0); certification threshold of 75 % (225 of 300 points) introduced; weighting of Size & Weight (30) and Design (20) corrected; worked example recalculated; chapters on publication, licence and test samples added; status of the PM Standard and independence principle included; editorial testing documented; language tightened; new logo. First English edition.
5	October 2025	Previous complete edition of the evaluation process (German).