

FREE GUIDE

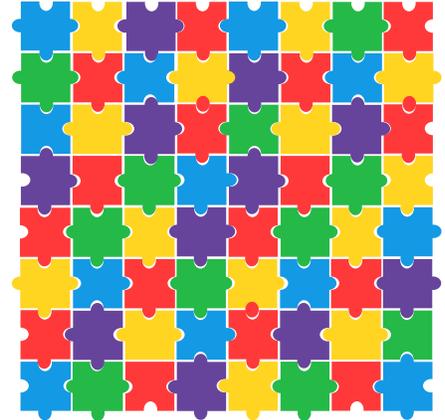


4 Simple Steps to an Exceptional Project Plan

What is a Project?

In project management, a project is a temporary venture to achieve a specific result.

Think about a project like completing a puzzle. You have to arrange various pieces in such a way to achieve a goal. You decide who participates and how long it takes you.



We will continue using the puzzle analogy for the following sections.

Think about a project you want to take on and describe it below.

Step 1: Define the Goal

The first thing that must be clear about a project is its goal. Let's say your project is to complete a puzzle. Your goal is very specific—to complete the puzzle. It would be best if you visualized the outcome. Puzzles usually provide a picture of the result, which helps guide you and keep you working toward it. You apply the same method for projects. This is your North Star.

Think about your project. Identify 1 - 2 goals using the SMART method.

Example: I want to complete the puzzle with a team of 3 in 10 days.



Use the SMART goal method.

S - Specific

M - Measurable

A - Achievable

R - Relevant

T - Time-bound

Why do this?

Now, you have a goal and a way to measure progress toward your goal.

What's the benefit?

It helps keep you and others on track to achieve your goal and remember what you set out to do.

Step 2: Break It Down

Once you set your goal(s), identify all the tasks required to reach those goals.

Puzzles usually come with defined pieces that are broken apart for you. It's similar with projects except you need to know the requirements and break them into categories or groups of tasks and sub-tasks.

While puzzles come with pieces, they need to be organized so that it is easy for you to complete them. Some people like to group and organize pieces by colour or puzzle region. So, you divide the puzzle into smaller sections or groups of pieces.



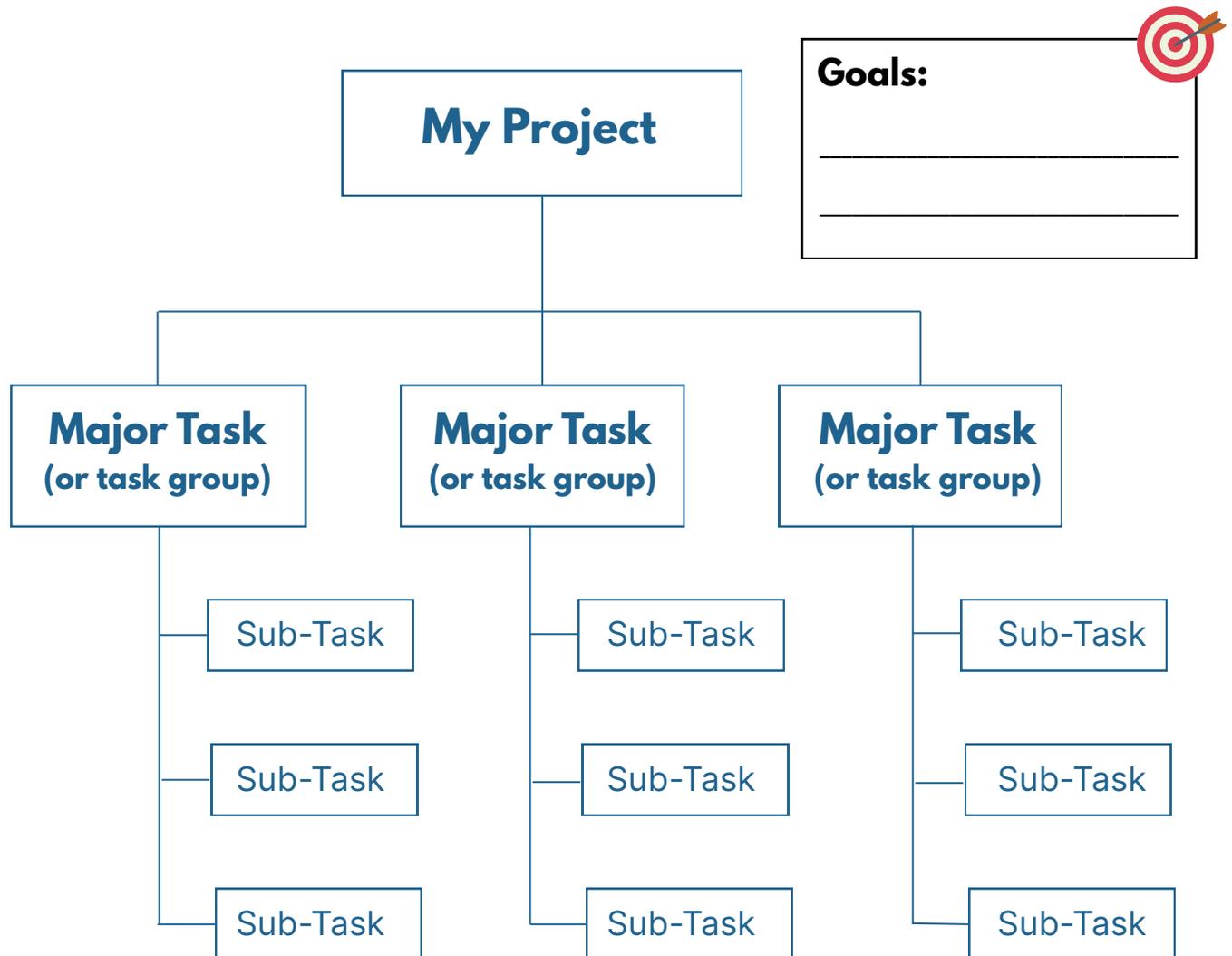
Distinguish between all the tasks you will complete and other tasks that could be done but are not currently a priority. This will establish boundaries and scope.

On projects, we create a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) to break the project requirements into manageable tasks.

On the next page, use the chart to break your project into task groups and individual tasks based on your goal(s).

You can also write down your project goals that you identified as a reminder when planning the work.

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)



Why do this?

The work is now broken out and organized, which makes it easier to see the entirety of the work and assign it to team members.

What's the benefit?

It helps with understanding what size of team you need.

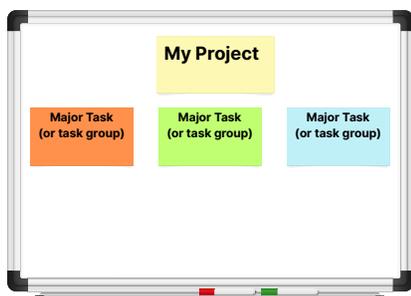
Step 3: Assign Tasks

Projects need people to do the work, like when pieces of a puzzle need to be placed by someone. When you have people working on a puzzle together, you can assign them the pieces within a specific group you've organized. It's the same with projects. You assign tasks to team members who are responsible for completing them. As a team, decide who is best suited to complete the tasks.

Use the same Work Breakdown Structure chart on the next page to assign tasks to team members. Another way to do this is to use different-coloured post-its on a wall in a collaborative setting.



Make sure everyone knows what they're assigned to so you don't have the same people working on the same things.



Use a wall or white board and work with a team to plan out the work and who it doing what. You can use different colors to distinguish between packages or work or task groups.

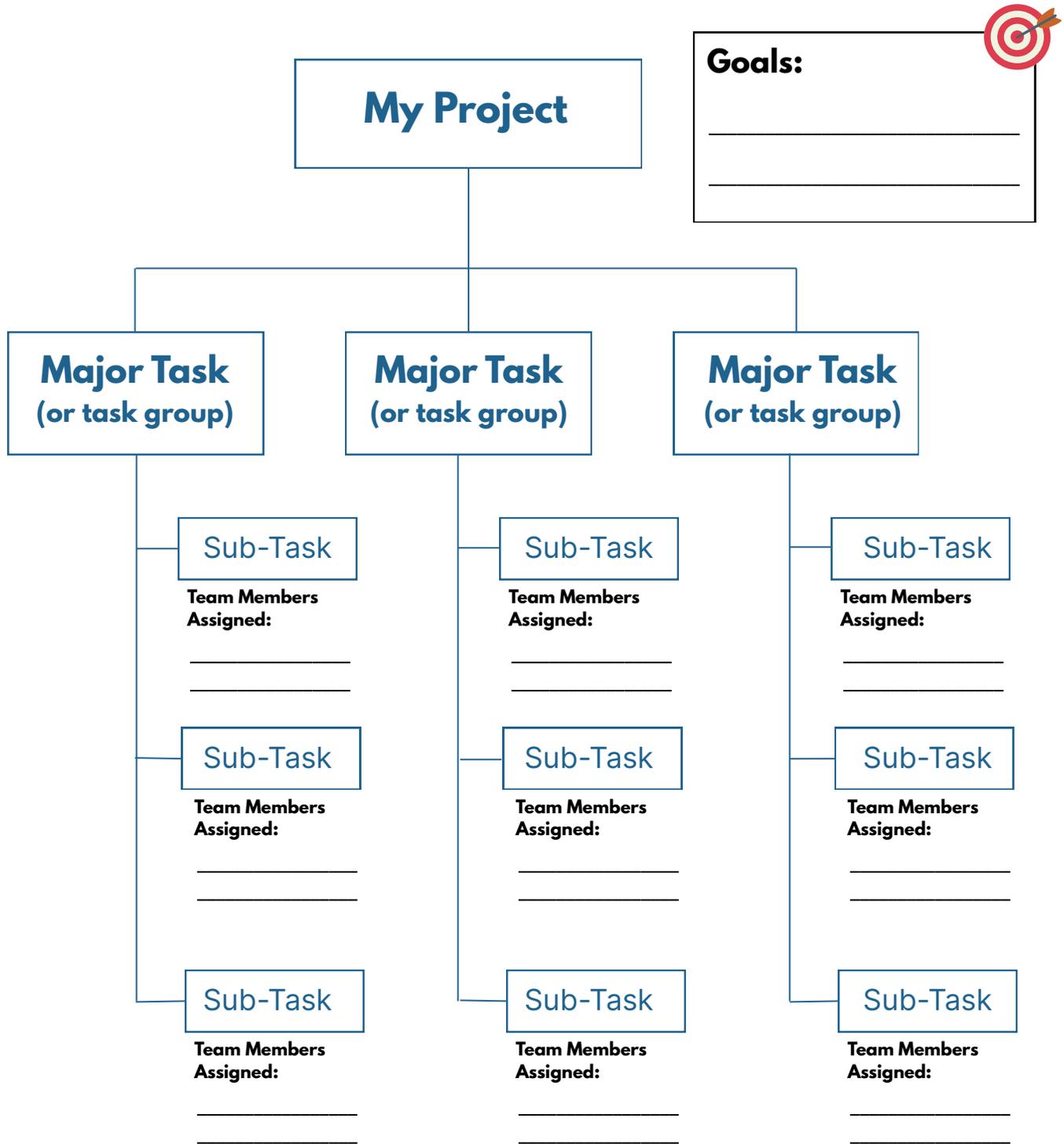
Why do this?

Now, everyone knows who is working on what, how it fits into the overall project scope, and its importance in achieving the project goals.

What's the benefit?

Reduces confusion and overlapping responsibilities.

Delivery Team



Step 4: Set A Timeline

You'll want to estimate how much time each task will take to complete and the sequence of the tasks that need to be completed.

This puzzle is going to take you a while to complete. If you don't have any time constraints, ask everyone to estimate how long it will take to complete their section and add it up. Remember that if everyone is working simultaneously, it likely won't take as long.



Map out the project tasks on a timeline and call out any tasks that need to be completed in sequence. In Project Management, we call this identifying dependencies.

You decide how long you have to finish the puzzle, just like setting a deadline for the project's completion. If you have to return the puzzle by a specific time because you borrowed it,

you'll have to impose deadlines so that you can disassemble it and return it on time. These are the types of conditions and constraints that could be encountered on a project and we must plan for them.

Why do this?

Now, everyone knows the correct sequence of tasks, their time commitment, and when the project will start and finish.

What's the benefit?

Calculating by each task group or individual task can provide greater clarity for estimating time and materials. However, estimates are never perfect.

Monitor Progress

At this point, everyone is working on their pieces together or in shifts. You will need to monitor how things are progressing. As you work on the puzzle, you check things like:

- How many pieces are in place?
- How many pieces are complete?
- How many pieces are left to place?



You usually have a project budget as well as a timeline. You want to monitor that you're not over spending so you don't run out of money before completing the project.

Is a team member moving slower than the others or as expected?

Find out why.

If they need help, another team member who is ahead can assist them. In project management, you monitor the progress of tasks to ensure everything is on track.

Why do this?

When you monitor progress and issues arise, they can be resolved so the team can focus on what they need to do.

What's the benefit?

This helps the project manager and team stay on track to meet the project goals.

Solve Problems

As you monitor progress, you may encounter some challenges. Sometimes, puzzle pieces don't fit perfectly, and you must figure out the correct position.

What if one person finds a piece that doesn't fit in the colour section of the puzzle? It would be best to communicate to ensure the others know and you can problem-solve as a team.

You might face issues in project management, and problem-solving skills help you find solutions.

This is being used with the puzzle analogy of course, however you may encounter similar issues on a project and working within a team.



Ensuring that the team works well together is an underrated aspect of being a project manager. If you create a safe space where everyone's boundaries are clear and respected, it helps a lot.

Why do this?

Being able to successfully solve problems as a team builds confidence and trust.

What's the benefit?

Over time, you reap the rewards of a high-performing team.

Finish on Time

Now that you've finished the puzzle, you and your team can enjoy the result and take pride in a job well done. You completed the puzzle as planned by putting all the pieces together on time.

In project management, finishing all tasks on time and within budget means successfully delivering the project.



Another way of measuring success that is equally, if not more important, is the degree of satisfaction within the project team and the satisfaction of the customer receiving the end result.

Why do this?

Celebrating success and small wins along the way builds team motivation.

What's the benefit?

Successful projects build momentum and set a good tone for new projects.

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