

# Sprint Planning

Turn a refined, prioritised backlog into a sprint the team can commit to: a single clear goal, stories selected against real capacity, a concrete task breakdown, and a stated commitment.

## DURATION

# 1

hours

## GROUP SIZE

the  
whole  
team,  
typically  
4–9

people

## WHAT YOU BRING

A refined backlog with sized, acceptance-criteria'd stories, the team's real capacity for the sprint, and recent velocity.

## WHAT YOU LEAVE WITH

- A specific, demonstrable sprint goal written where all can see it
- A selected story list sized against honest capacity and carry-over
- A task breakdown where each task fits inside a day
- An explicit, round-the-room commitment from every team member

## WHO TO INVITE

- **Facilitator.** Runs the clock, holds each phase to its shape, and blocks drift into story prep or architecture debate.
- **Product owner.** Mandatory. Sets the sprint goal, explains stories, and makes trade-off calls when ambition outruns capacity.
- **Developers.** The whole team. Pressure-test the goal, break stories into tasks, and own the commitment explicitly.
- **Tester / QA.** Plans with the team; testing capacity counts as capacity and belongs in task breakdown from the start.
- **Operations / SRE.** First-class when the sprint touches deploys, on-call, or infra; on-call load is a real capacity drain.

## USE WHEN

- You work in one- or two-week sprints with the whole team available
- The top of the backlog is refined, sized, and has acceptance criteria
- Someone can say what the sprint should achieve, not just do
- You need a goal the team can steer mid-sprint trade-offs against

## AVOID WHEN

- × The top of the backlog is unrefined -- prepare stories first
- × The team runs continuous flow with no sprint boundary
- × You're planning multiple sprints ahead -- that's roadmap work
- × The product owner cannot attend the session

## How the session runs

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- **Phase 1 -- Sprint goal (10-15 minutes)**

Before any story is discussed, the product owner proposes a single-sentence goal and the team pressure-tests it for specificity, achievability, and demonstrability. The facilitator writes the agreed goal large at the top of the board.

- **Phase 2 -- Story selection (20-40 minutes)**

Working from the top of the backlog, the team pulls stories that serve the goal while a running capacity tally stays visible. When the tally hits capacity, every new pull forces an explicit trade with the product owner.

- **Phase 3 -- Task breakdown (25-50 minutes)**

The team decomposes each selected story into day-or-less tasks, naming dependencies, specialist needs, and the unglamorous work -- testing, migration, deployment, on-call handover. The facilitator time-boxes each story to keep things moving.

- **Phase 4 -- Commitment check (5-10 minutes)**

The facilitator reads the goal and story list aloud, then asks each person in turn whether they believe the plan is achievable. A "we'll try" is treated as a no, and scope is cut by removing stories, never by cutting corners.