

TOPIC B

Enter Task Duration Estimates

Up to this point, you have created an activity plan that contains a simple list of a few tasks. Without knowing the duration of the tasks, it would be impossible to plan your project. In this topic, you will enter task duration estimates.

Duration

For Project to accurately schedule the tasks in your project plan, you must enter the estimated duration for each task. Without duration, your project plan would be nothing more than a to-do list. With duration, it becomes more complete and the tasks can be linked more accurately within the project.

Duration is the amount of working time between the start and finish of a task. Day is the default parameter, and Project calculates one day as eight hours, one week as 40 hours, and one month as 20 working days. So if a task takes 5 days, you can specify either 5 days, 1 week, or 0.25 months. Nonworking days are not counted, so 1 week is not the same as 7 calendar days.

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Aug 2, '20				
				F	S	S	M	T
Begin Project	0 days	Mon 8/3/20	Mon 8/3/20				8/3	
Project Status Meeting	69.25 days	Tue 8/4/20	Tue 11/10/20					
Review Existing HR Manual	1 day	Mon 8/3/20	Mon 8/3/20					
Review Common Industry Practices	1 day	Mon 8/3/20	Mon 8/3/20					
Review Government Regulations	2 days	Mon 8/3/20	Tue 8/4/20					
Interview Department Heads	1 day	Mon 8/3/20	Mon 8/3/20					

Figure 3-7: Durations shown in the Gantt chart.

There are other parameters, such as minutes and hours, to estimate the duration of the tasks. The duration settings can be altered using the **Project Options** dialog box on the **Schedule** page.

Duration Codes

The duration codes of the other parameters that can be used in a project are displayed in the table.

Duration	Displays As
Minutes	m, min, minute
Hours	h, hr, hour
Days	d, dy, day
Weeks	w, wk, week
Months	mo, mon


<i>Duration</i>	<i>Displays As</i>
Elapsed Duration	emin, ehr, eday, ewk Use <i>elapsed duration</i> when continuous effort is needed; nonworking time or resource constraints are disregarded. Usually used for unattended tasks such as allowing paint to dry or concrete to set.

Estimated Duration

When you add a task to a project plan, Project automatically sets the duration as **1 day?**. This signifies that the duration has been estimated, because Project needs to draw a Gantt bar associated with the new task, and the software does not know what you would like the duration to be. You will need to change the duration to an appropriate value to remove the question mark.

An estimated duration is also useful if you are uncertain about the duration of a task, and want to signify that you have estimated it—for example **4 days?**. When you want to firm up the duration, simply type over it with the correct value and the question mark will disappear.

If the duration of any task has been estimated, the summary task containing it will also have a question mark, as will the project summary task.

	Note: Summary tasks and the project summary task will be discussed in another lesson.
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Milestones

A *milestone* is a significant point in the life of your project—such as a deliverable or the end of a phase. In traditional project management practice, milestones are not tasks, do not take time, and do not require resources. However, in Microsoft Project, milestones are tasks that usually have zero duration but may have duration if needed.

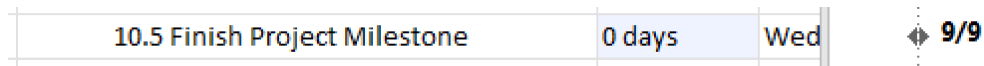



Figure 3–8: A project milestone is marked by a diamond on the Gantt chart.

In **Gantt Chart** view, milestones are indicated with a diamond. You can create a new milestone using the **Insert Milestone** button in the **Insert** command group on the **Task** tab of the ribbon. New milestones have zero duration. If you enter a new task in the **Task Entry** table and set the **Duration** column to **0**, Project will automatically convert it to a milestone. You can convert a regular task into a milestone by checking the **Mark task as milestone** check box on the **Advanced** tab of the **Task Information** dialog box. Regular tasks converted to milestones retain their durations and their resources.

	Access the Checklist tile on your CHOICE Course screen for reference information and job aids on How to Enter Task Duration Estimates.
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ACTIVITY 3-2

Entering Task Duration Estimates

Before You Begin

The **My HR Manual Tasks.mpp** file is open.

Scenario

Now that you have some tasks entered into your HR Manual project plan, you must enter the duration for each task. This step will be crucial to acquire needed resources when the schedule is approved by the development team.

1. Designate the **Begin Project** task as a milestone by making the duration zero days.
 - a) In the **Task Entry** table, select the **Duration** field for the **Begin Project** task.
 - b) Type **0** and then press **Enter**.
Verify that the duration is zero days, and that a diamond symbol is displayed in the Gantt chart for the **Begin Project** task.

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Aug 2, '20						
				F	S	S	M	T		
Begin Project	0 days	Mon 8/3/20	Mon 8/3/20							8/3



Note: Note that the **Duration** and **Finish** fields are shaded, indicating that a change has been made to the task.

2. Enter the durations for the remaining tasks as follows:
 - a) **Review Existing HR Manual: 1 day**
 - b) **Review Common Industry Practices: 1 day**
 - c) **Review Government Regulations: 2 days**
 - d) **Interview Department Heads: 1 day**
3. Save and close the file.

Summary

In this lesson, you added tasks to a project plan, and imported tasks from other programs. You also estimated the durations of your tasks.

What is an advantage of using a recurring task?

When do you think using milestones will be helpful?



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