

TOPIC C

Schedule Tasks

Now that you've defined the relationship between tasks, you can use Microsoft Project to schedule the work. Understanding how Project schedules tasks will help you get the most from your project plans. If you identify the real drivers of tasks in your project—for example, that an event has to take place on a certain day—you can use the powerful features of Project to make sure that all the interdependent tasks are scheduled most efficiently. In this topic, you will schedule tasks and manage constraints and deadlines.

Task Constraints

A **task constraint** is a date-based limitation imposed on a task. You can set task constraints to control the start and finish dates of a task. Tasks can have one of eight schedule constraint types:

- **As Soon As Possible** (the default when projects are scheduled from a start date)
- **As Late As Possible** (the default when projects are scheduled from a finish date)
- **Finish No Earlier Than**
- **Finish No Later Than**
- **Must Finish On**
- **Must Start On**
- **Start No Earlier Than**
- **Start No Later Than**

Figure 4–9: Constraint types are set in the Task Information dialog box.


Generally, you should keep the default constraint so that project scheduling remains as flexible as possible. However, you may want to change the constraint if you have a task with a specific date that is critical for project success.

Deadlines

You may be familiar with the concept of deadlines in a variety of contexts, but in Microsoft Project, a **deadline** is a target finish date for a task. Setting a deadline on a task does not affect the automatic scheduling of a task. It simply gives you a visual indicator that you can use to monitor progress.



Figure 4-10: A green arrow marks the deadline date in the Gantt chart.

	<p>Access the Checklist tile on your CHOICE Course screen for reference information and job aids on How to Schedule Tasks.</p>
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ACTIVITY 4–3

Scheduling Tasks

Data File

C:\091098Data\Managing Tasks\HR Manual Scheduling.mpp

Before You Begin

Microsoft Project is open.

Scenario

You have continued to create the appropriate relationships in your work breakdown structure, and the tasks are all linked. You now have some new information to incorporate into the schedule.

The senior attorney in the Legal Department will be out of town until Monday, August 17. She will be unable to begin her review of the outline on the 14th as originally planned, and the task has to be postponed. Even if earlier work is completed ahead of schedule, the **Review with Legal Department** task cannot begin until August 17. You address this situation in Project by adding a constraint to the task. The head of the PMO has stated that the project must be completed by October 9, so you add a deadline to the **Project Complete** task.

1. Open the HR Manual Scheduling.mpp project plan file.

- On the **Open** tab, in **Backstage View**, select **Browse**.
- In the **Open** dialog box, navigate to the **C:\091098Data\Managing Tasks** folder containing your class files.
- Select **HR Manual Scheduling.mpp** and select **Open**.

2. Set a constraint on the Review with Legal Department task.

- Double-click the **3.2 Review with Legal Department** task.
- In the **Task Information** dialog box, select the **Advanced** tab.
- From the **Constraint type** drop-down list, select **Start No Earlier Than**.
- In the **Constraint date** date box, select **August 17, 2020**.
- Select **OK** to close the **Task Information** dialog box.

Verify that the **Constraint** icon  appears in the **Indicators** column.

3. Add a deadline to the Project Complete task.

- Double-click **9 Project Complete**.
- In the **Task Information** dialog box, select the **Advanced** tab.
- In the **Deadline** date box, select **October 9, 2020**.
- Select **OK** to close the **Task Information** dialog box.

Verify that the **Deadline** marker  appears in the Gantt chart.

4. Save your changes as My HR Manual Scheduling.mpp and close the file.

- On the ribbon, select **File→Save As**.
- Select **Browse** and then navigate to **C:\091098Data\Managing Tasks**.
- In the **File name** field, enter **My HR Manual Scheduling.mpp** and then select **Save**.
- Select **File→Close**.

Summary

In this lesson, you added and organized tasks and created relationships in your project plan. Creating a robust, well-thought-out work breakdown structure is an important part of project management. By identifying the tasks that have special relationship and dependency requirements, you will be ready to manage your resources and handle any scheduling issues that come up during project execution. Taking advantage of these features while leaving your project plan flexible enough to adapt to change will save you effort down the road.

Besides the Finish-to-Start dependency, which of the other dependency types (Start-to-Start, Finish-to-Finish, Start-to-Finish) might you use and why?

Which of the task scheduling features do you think will have the greatest impact on your future project plans?



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