



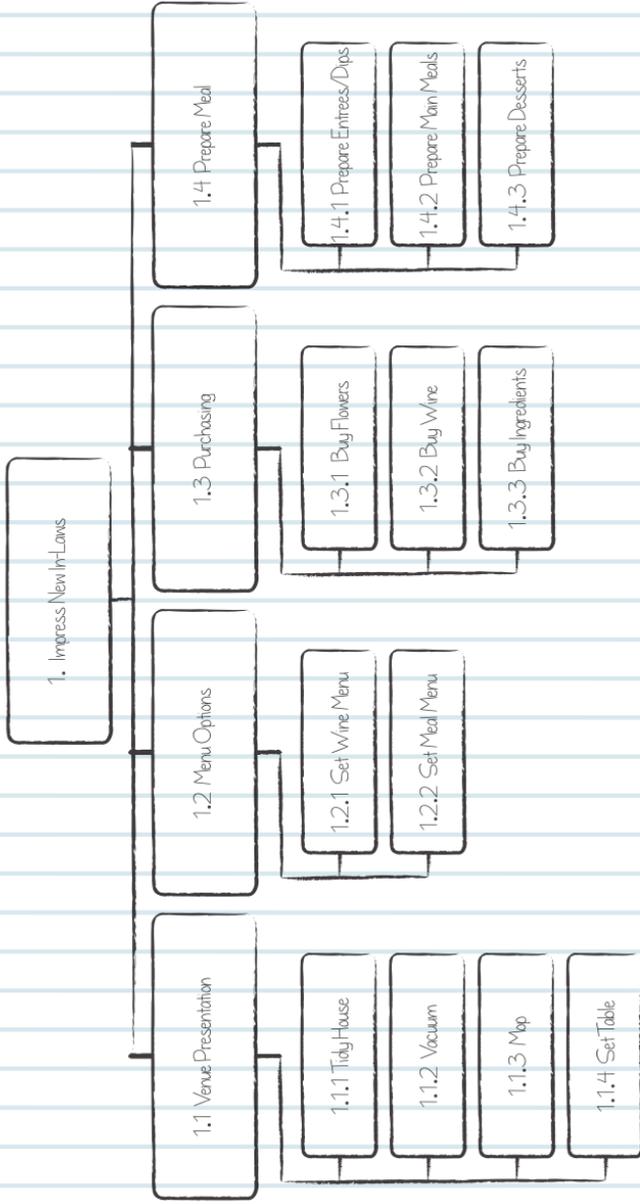
# Work Breakdown Structure



The Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) provides a view of your project based on activities. WBS is a hierarchical model of all the work required to produce the project's outputs. Each level of the WBS represents an increasingly detailed description of the project work by activity. The lowest level describes a package of work that can be costed, scheduled, monitored and controlled.

The smallest bundles of work are known as Work Packages. Work packages should be of a size to be able to be assigned to team members.

The WBS provides a basis for determining the project schedule and resource allocations and therefore is the foundation for monitoring and controlling the project. When complete the WBS represents all of the work specified under the current project scope.



# Work Breakdown Structure

## Doing it

1. Use the project name as the top of your hierarchy.
2. Identify and analyse the outputs and related activities required to deliver the project outcomes.
3. Group conceptually common activities.
4. Classify these activities under appropriate headings. These headings become your second tier.
5. Continue to decompose the activities in subsequent tiers of the hierarchy until you are at the point where the activity is understandable enough to be costed and scheduled.

## Doing it well

- > The number of levels in a WBS will depend on the complexity and size of the project. Three level WBS's are usually suitable for small to medium sized projects, but larger exercises may require more levels in the hierarchy.
- > Ensure that each activity identified in the WBS is independent of the other ie there should be no overlap between the activities. Overlap can result in duplicated work, miscommunications, and ambiguity in responsibility and authority. It can also cause confusion in project budgets and costing.
- > Don't breakdown the structure past work package level, the point at which you can easily schedule, cost, monitor and control the activity being described, as it is unnecessary to schedule, track and control a project past this level of detail.
- > If an activity is too small to cost or is not worth estimating, it is likely to be part of another activity.
- > An activity is often too big if it extends beyond or crosses more than one reporting period. Common heuristics are: No activity should extend beyond 80 hours effort.
- > Remember the WBS should represent the work required to manage the project as well as the work required to deliver the project. Don't think of the WBS as:
  - > an exhaustive list of work
  - > a project plan, schedule, or chronological listing
  - > an organisational hierarchy.
- > Do think of the WBS as:
  - > a logical grouping of the activities required to create the deliverables needed to achieve the project outcomes
  - > the foundation of your project schedule
  - > a mechanism for informing the project team of the work required.

## Scenario

Jayne was struggling to do initial costing and time estimates for her project. She decided to do a WBS to help her divide her project into more manageable chunks.

Jayne reviewed her project outcomes and in consultation with relevant parties established the outputs that would be needed to realise these outcomes. She then spoke to different people about the work that would be required to produce each of the required outcomes. She continued these conversations until she felt comfortable that she understood an activity enough to cost and schedule it. Jayne then represented this information in a WBS.

Having chunked the project down Jayne found it much easier to estimate costs and time for the activities in the project. It also provided the foundation for her thinking about scheduling and resource requirements.

## Fast facts

- > The 100% rule—the WBS should represent 100 per cent of the work defined by the project scope and capture all outputs. Outputs include internal, external, and interim tasks, and also includes project management activity, and externally driven compliance activities.
- > The concept of WBS was developed as part of Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) for the United States Department of Defence.

## Learning more

Search using terms like:

- > Work Breakdown Structure
- > WBS
- > work packages.

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## Contact

Planning & Project Support Office

Division of Information

South Oval Building 88 T1

The Australian National University

Canberra, ACT 0200 Australia

+61 2 6125 6441

[projects@anu.edu.au](mailto:projects@anu.edu.au)

[projects.anu.edu.au](http://projects.anu.edu.au)