By following some guidelines for creating your Work Breakdown Structure, you can achieve a more effective and manageable project schedule. The WBS’s purpose is to help manage a project schedule. When created without guidelines, the project schedule is in danger of becoming another project.

* The WBS is not a to-do list. Are you managing tasks or are you managing a to–do checklist? Usually, tasks or deliverables are entered into the project schedule. Checklists or Work Breakdown Structuce dictionaries which contain more detail of how to accomplish the tasks are kept in another location such as a Word Document, Excel Workbook or SharePoint list.
* Identify deliverables within the WBS. Work from deliverable to deliverable in the development of the schedule.
* Break the deliverables into assignable work. When the task is at too high a level, establishing the work, assignments, order and relationships between tasks becomes more difficult.
* Establish a standard design for each section of work. An example of this would be:

Summary Task

Detail task

Detail task

Detail task

Milestone task

Using this format will allow for creating high level reports (Milestone reports) easily as well as moving sections of deliverables around easily.

* A naming standard for naming tasks is helpful and establishes consistancy:
* Summary tasks**:** these names should be nouns that describe the work to be completed in the section of work.   
   **Examples:** Location, Network design, Clean-up, Foundations,   
   Development, Requirements. Training, Pilot, Unit Testing
* Detail tasks**:** should be action verbs and a noun which describes the work that is to be completed for the task.   
    
   **Examples:** Build test database, Review requirements,   
   Develop preliminary budget, Create training materials, Modify code
* Milestones**:** should be used as goal dates within a project schedule. Naming standards for milestones should be past-tense adverbs.

**Examples:** Development completed, Vendors contracted,

New Facility Opened, Software selected, Integration testing completed

* Every summary task should have at least two subtasks. Detail tasks and milestones can be in the WBS without being part of a summary task grouping.
* Establish maximum and minimum lengths of duration for tasks. Create a rule of thumb based on the length of each project. For example: If you have a 6 month project no task should be less than 1 day and no task will be longer than 2 weeks. Use the rule as a guide for estimating task lengths. If tasks are too long, break the work down further.
* Decide if you will be creating a WBS in the rolling wave approach. The rolling wave approach is used for schedules managing software development or any schedule where all of the details of the project are not known at the beginning of the project. Consider creating place holders for future phases of the project and elaborate the work one phase at a time.
* Deliverables: Completing a section of work means that the deliverable of that section has been accepted. Create a task for the delivery of the deliverable and create a milestone to represent the acceptance of the deliverable. The two are rarely occur at the same time.
* Level of detail. The WBS may contain as many levels of detail as you need but best practices suggest that the higher the level number the more complex the schedule becomes. Recommendations suggest that the detail is managable using five or less levels.
* If too much detail is put into the project schedule, the schedule will become a project unto itself. The more tasks, the more work.
* Use the WBS to help manage the scope of your project. If the task isn’t in the project, consider it out of scope. When you enter tasks into the project schedule, ask yourself if the task is necessary.
* When planning the WBS think about just the work of the project. Many project managers like to start thinking about who will do the work and when. It is a good idea to focus on the work of the project only and think of the work as the “what” of the project. The “who” and “when” will come as the project schedule develops.
* Having the project team or the top level resources help build the WBS for a project is a win-win for the project:
  + Increases resource buy in
  + Encourages resource contribution
  + Many eyes looking at problems from different angles
  + Less probability of missing tasks
  + Encourages team building