## **Best practices to consider when creating dependencies**

Relationship between tasks will allow you to create network of related tasks. The network will show order the tasks will occur. Below are some best practices which should be considered when creating relationships:

* All tasks should have both a predecessor and a successor. The timeline for the project is based on task duration and relationships. If tasks are not linked in the network of tasks, their duration will not be accounted for within the timeline. Making sure all task durations are accounted for will avoid surprises at the end of a project.
* When creating dependencies or relationships, apply the rule – because I can, is it a good idea? Do not link every task to every other task.
* Think about what task pushes or influences another task. If a task is late, what other tasks will be affected? Link only tasks with a direct affect on a successor task. Ask yourself what needs to be completed before you can do the next step and if it is late, which tasks will be affected.
* Link detailed tasks and milestones only. The completion of tasks will push the milestones or the short term goals. Linking summary tasks means that an entire section of work must be completed before the next section may be started. Ask yourself if that is true for your situation before linking at the summary level. Linking summary tasks is not recommended.
* Tasks should always be linked to push milestones. For example: define what the definition of “project completed” is. The multiple parallel paths that must be completed to conclude the project should all be linked to the ending milestone. If any of the parallel paths takes longer than planned, the milestone date will be pushed out in time.

In the example below “Paint bedrooms & Family Room” is the starting task for the project. All 3 sections of work can start when the project starts. All 3 sections must be completed before the house is ready to sell. If any of the sections take longer, each section has the ability to push the ending milestone or when the house is ready to sell. The longest of the parallel paths will be considered the critical path or the project section that determines the timeline of the project.

(insert 6-10 parallel path sceen shot here)

* Create as many parallel paths as possible to shorten the schedule. Use of the Start-To-Start and Finish-To–Finish relationships will help create parallel paths and shorten the project time line. Be aware, however, just because you can schedule tasks in parallel, you might not have the resources to perform the work and which could result in extending the timeline.
* Do not link tasks based on a resource. Some people will plan tasks to occur at specific times because they think that a resource will be available at that time. Chances are the expected resources will not be available at the planned point in time because other tasks for that resource have changed. Plan the schedule for the work required and plan/arrange for required resources as the time draws nearer to when the task will be performed.
* Links may be external to the project. Project 2013 will allow dependencies to exist in other projects that are linked to tasks in your project. This is similar to links in Excel. In Excel, if links between files are created and the files are relocated, the links will be broken. Project 2013’s links between project files will work the same way.

**NOTE:** Project 2013 also offers the option for tasks that are moved or added to the schedule to automatically link in a Finish-to-Start relationship or not be linked at all. This is a personal preference and may be applied to a specific project or all projects viewed on your desktop.

To view or change this option: File **** Options **** Schedule