GANTT chart creation guide

Gantt chart is a widely used tool in project management. It provides a visual presentation of the project schedule and displays tasks, milestones, and their durations in an easily readable format helping project managers and team members fully comprehend the timeline. Gantt charts allow task dependencies mapping visually showing which tasks need to be completed before other can start, which helps with identifying critical paths and understanding impact of delays.

A Gantt chart can also serve as an important communication tool, allowing project managers to share project plans with team members, stakeholders, and clients. If made correctly, they can be easily modified and updated to accommodate possible changes in the project.

This is a step-by-step guide on how to create a Gantt chart for your project.

1. **Step: Define your project tasks**

Before you make your Gantt chart you need to have a clear picture of your project. What tasks does your project consist of? List all of them. After you have your initial task list completed, your next step is to break it down into smaller and more manageable subtasks that are clear and simple. For example, project planning can be divided into multiple subtasks: defining scope, creating project plan, establishing timeline, and assigning roles.

2. **Step: Determine task durations**

When making a Gantt chart it is important to understand your project's needs including the time it will take to finish each individual task. This will depend on, for example, task complexity, available resources, and amount of assigned team members. It is crucial to be realistic and to consider all possible factors during this step.

3. **Step: Identify task dependencies**

In this stage you already have your tasks, subtasks, and their estimated durations ready, and now you will need to identify dependencies between different tasks. In every project there are some tasks that simply cannot be started before something else has first been finished: you can't start coding a website before your customer has approved planned layout & design. Taking note of these dependencies ensures accurate scheduling.

4. **Step: Choose a tool for Gantt chart creation**

Next you will need a tool to create your Gantt chart with. It is mostly preference question, and there are many great options to choose from. For simplicity, you might choose something like Microsoft Excel or Project, or Google sheets, or you might prefer using more professional and specially for this purpose designed tools like Asana, Trello, TeamGantt, GanttProject, or Wrike.

5. **Step: Set up your Gantt chart**

When you have chosen your preferred tool, you are ready to start setting up your Gantt chart. No matter what tool you are using, typically you align your tasks vertically on the left and timeline horizontally on top. It is also typical to use lines and arrows to connect tasks that have dependencies, as doing so increases readability.

Here is a Gantt chart example using Microsoft Excel:

PM Group 6 Gantt chart example for PM notebook
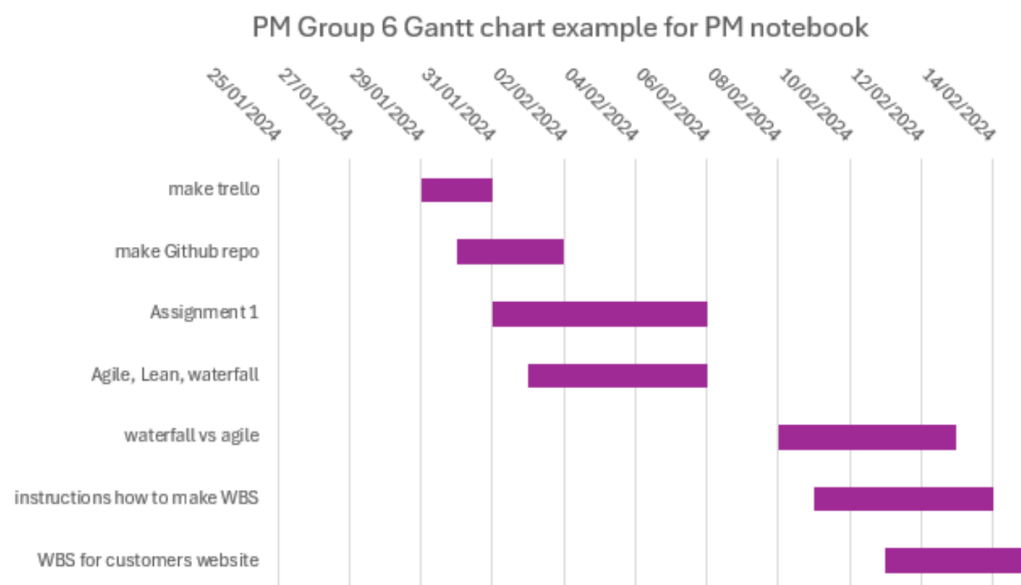
And another sample chart in which tasks related/connected with lines:
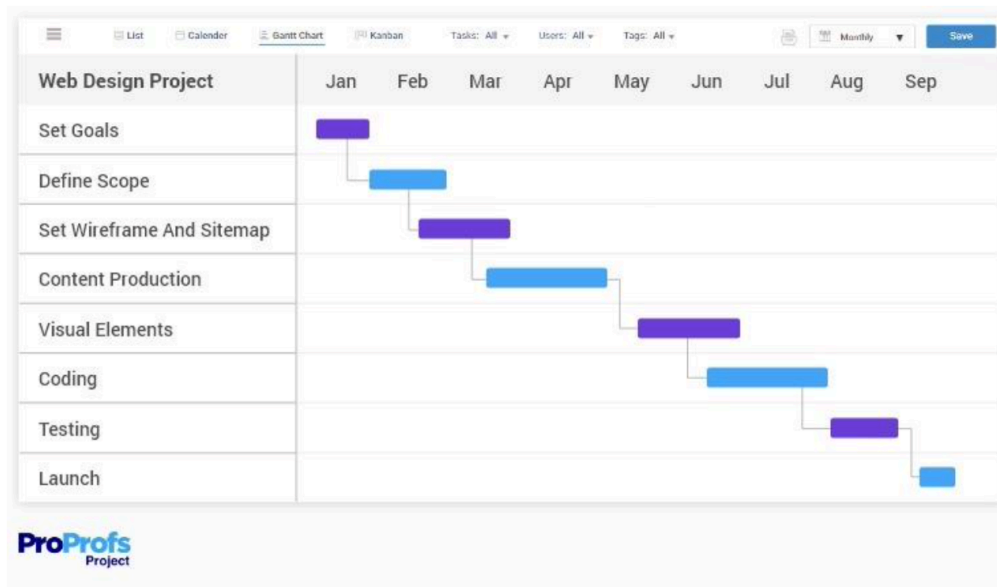
6. Step: Customize, Review, Finalize & Share

It is recommended to try and make your Gantt chart visually appealing and easy to understand. Color coding tasks and assigning different colors to different entities helps to visually separate them from each other improving readability. You can also add milestones to highlight your project's timeline better, as well as choosing time intervals (e.g. days, weeks, or months) based on your project's specific needs.

Assigning responsibilities clearly on the Gantt chart is advisable. This promotes accountability and ensures everyone knows their role in the project. Some tools also offer filtering and different view options allowing focusing on specific tasks, team members, and timeframes and ensuring readability and usability.

Don't forget to double-check your Gantt chart to ensure all needed tasks are listed and correctly represented, dependencies clearly shown, and durations correctly marked. Once everything seems to be in order, you are ready to share your Gantt chart with relevant team members and stakeholders.

7. Step: Tips

Some important tips to remember:

1. Update your Gantt chart regularly to make sure it reflects the current status of your project. Did the project timeline change due to delays? Did you get a new team member and assigned them to a specific task? Mark it on your chart!
2. Communicate made changes and updates to your team as your Gantt chart should be a tool that is regularly used during the project.
3. Consider integrating your Gantt chart with other tools, for example calendar applications or other time tracking software, communication tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams.

By following these steps, you should be able to create an effective Gantt chart to manage and visualize your project timeline!

Sources

- https://www.clearpointstrategy.com/blog/how-to-create-a-gantt-chart
- https://www.canva.com/online-whiteboard/gantt-chart/