

Universal Task Decomposition Templates

Right, let's zoom out to the meta-level frameworks that work anywhere.

Template 1: The Dependency Tree

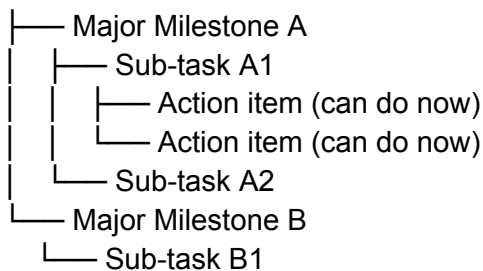
(What must happen before other things can happen?)

The process:

1. Write your final goal at the top
2. Ask: "What needs to exist for this to be possible?"
3. Keep asking that question until you hit tasks you can do TODAY

Visual structure:

FINAL GOAL



Real-world example:

- Goal: "Get promoted to senior engineer"
 - Dependencies: Technical skills, visibility, leadership experience
 - Sub-tasks: Complete certification, lead one project, present at team meetings
 - Today actions: Sign up for certification course, volunteer for next project
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Template 2: The Input-Process-Output Model

(Break by what goes in vs. what comes out)

The framework:

- **Inputs:** What resources/information do you need?

- **Process:** What transformations happen?
- **Outputs:** What gets delivered?

Example (making dinner):

- Inputs: Groceries, recipe, kitchen tools
- Process: Prep ingredients → Cook → Plate
- Outputs: Meal, dirty dishes, leftovers

Example (work presentation):

- Inputs: Data, stakeholder requirements, previous presentations
- Process: Analyze data → Create slides → Rehearse → Deliver
- Outputs: Presentation file, stakeholder buy-in, action items

Why this works: Forces you to identify what's missing BEFORE you start.

Template 3: The Time-Boxing Method

(Break by how long things take, not what they are)

The structure:

1. Estimate total time for the project
2. Divide into fixed time blocks
3. Assign one concrete deliverable per block

Example rules:

- 2-hour blocks for creative work
- 30-minute blocks for admin tasks
- 15-minute blocks for communication

Work example (quarterly report):

- Block 1 (2 hours): Gather all data sources
- Block 2 (2 hours): Create graphs and visualizations
- Block 3 (1 hour): Write executive summary
- Block 4 (30 min): Format and proofread

Life example (planning vacation):

- Block 1 (30 min): Research destinations
- Block 2 (45 min): Compare flight prices

- Block 3 (20 min): Book accommodation
 - Block 4 (15 min): Create packing list
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Template 4: The Question Cascade

(Break tasks by asking progressively specific questions)

The pattern:

1. **What** needs to happen? (The goal)
2. **Why** does this matter? (The motivation/constraint)
3. **Who** is involved? (The stakeholders/resources)
4. **When** does each piece need completing? (The timeline)
5. **How** will each step get done? (The execution)

Work example:

- What: Launch new product feature
 - Why: Customer retention is dropping 15%
 - Who: Engineering (3 people), design (1 person), QA (1 person)
 - When: Design by week 1, dev by week 4, QA by week 5, launch week 6
 - How: Sprint planning → Daily standups → Weekly demos
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Template 5: The Constraint-First Breakdown

(Start with limitations, not possibilities)

The process:

1. List all constraints (time, money, people, tools, knowledge)
2. Design the smallest version that respects ALL constraints
3. Break that small version into sequential steps

Example (home renovation on a budget):

- Constraints: \$2,000, 3 weekends, DIY only, keep living there
- Smallest version: Paint bedroom, replace fixtures
- Steps:
 1. Calculate paint needed (30 min)
 2. Buy supplies (2 hours)
 3. Move furniture (1 hour)

4. Paint walls (1 day)
5. Install fixtures (3 hours)

Template 6: The Parallel vs. Sequential Filter

(Identify what CAN'T be done simultaneously)

Two-column approach:

Can Do In Parallel	Must Do Sequentially
Research competitors	Write code (after design)
Design mockups	Test code (after writing)
Draft email	Deploy (after testing)

Why this matters: Most people treat everything as sequential when 40-60% could run in parallel.

My 3 Questions:

1. **Which template resonates with how your brain naturally works?** (Some people think in time blocks, others in dependencies, others in constraints)
2. **What's a real task you're facing right now?** (I can demonstrate applying 2-3 of these templates to it)
3. **Are you more paralyzed by "too many options" or "don't know where to start"?** (Different templates solve different psychological blocks)

Give me those answers and I'll show you exactly how to apply the right template(s) to your actual situation.