

Chapter 11: The Daily Scrum

Some frameworks and methodologies have a *Daily Standup*.

We don't have *Daily Standups* in Scrum.

First of all, the term is ableist. Not everyone can stand.

Secondly, the idea behind a *Daily Standup* is that it won't last long because people will eventually get tired of standing.

Scrum practitioners don't believe the infliction of pain is the proper way to motivate people.

The Daily Scrum is a 15-minute event for the Developers of the Scrum Team.

The purpose of the Daily Scrum is to inspect progress toward the Sprint Goal and adapt the Sprint Backlog as necessary, adjusting the upcoming planned work.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9



Figure 1. The purpose of the Daily Scrum is for the developers to metaphorically get the ball moving again.

Adapting to Change

Things change from day to day, and changes can mess up your plans.

That's why developers get together everyday for a Daily Scrum so they can talk about anything that is impeding or accelerating their progress towards the Sprint Goal.

If things are going sideways, the developers adapt. If things are going better than expected, the developers adapt.

The goal of the Daily Scrum is for developers to talk, discuss progress, and quickly solve any problems that have arisen since they last spoke.

The Daily Scrum is time-boxed to 15 minutes.

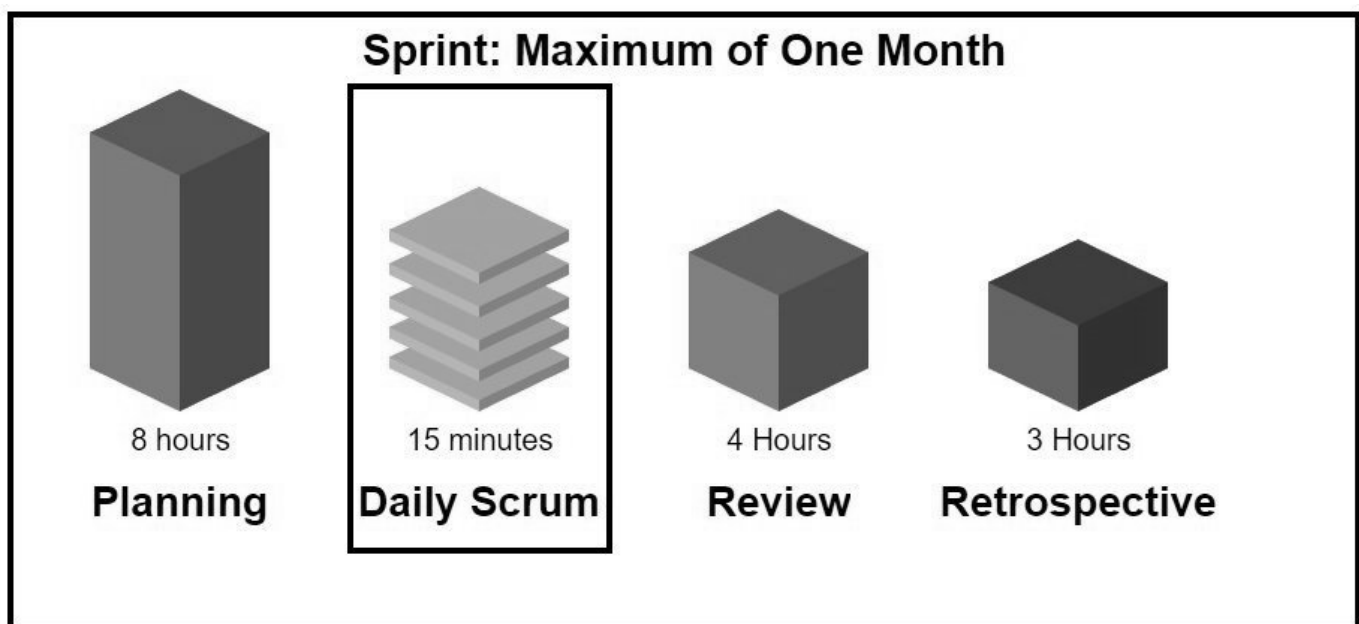


Figure 2. The Daily Scrum takes place on every workday during the Sprint.

Keep the Time and Location Consistent

To reduce complexity, it is held at the same time and place every working day of the Sprint.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

All Scrum events are supposed to be held at the same time and in the same location. This applies to the Daily Scrum as well.

This particular point is more salient when developers work in the same office building. You don't want the developers wasting 10 minutes every day trying to figure out which conference room to go to.

In the post-COVID age where teams are largely remote, 'the same time and location' now equates to a Zoom or Microsoft Teams call that takes place at the same time every day.

Demystifying the Daily Scrum

Let's get real about the Daily Scrum for a minute.

People always complain that Scrum has too many time wasting meetings. When they say that, they're usually talking about the Daily Scrum.

If your Daily Scrum feels like a waste of time, you're doing the Daily Scrum wrong. The Daily Scrum shouldn't feel like a formal, highly structured meeting. The Daily Scrum should feel casual and natural.

Scrum doesn't try to put an overwhelming amount of structure and ceremony around the development process. At its heart, Scrum just says:

- Plan your work before you start. That's why we have the Sprint Planning meeting.
- Regularly review your work with stakeholders. That's why we have the Sprint Review.
- Regularly talk about how you can improve things. That's why we have the Sprint Retrospective.

It's hard to think someone could argue that any of these meeting are bad. These activities just naturally evolve from any team that's serious about software development.

Scrum also says that every workday the developers should talk to each other about what they're doing. That hardly seems unreasonable.

Keep the Daily Scrum Simple

Scrum isn't some framework that demands developers use some crazy set of new and revolutionary techniques. All Scrum really does is document the practices good development teams already do.

Did you ever work on a group project in High School or College? One where you had to meet-up with five friends in the library a few times to get the project finished?

What did you all do for the first 15 minutes when you got together?

- You bitched about your prof
- You talked about what other teams were doing
- You discussed what you managed to get done
- You talked about what you didn't get done
- You asked others for help with things you couldn't manage
- You talked about things that were blocking your progress and you offered help to others

You'd have a pretty dysfunctional team if y'all didn't chat casually about these types of things when you got together.

The Daily Scrum is simply trying to capture the natural energy and enthusiasm highly motivated teams should already have when working collaboratively on a project.

Rules of the Daily Scrum

The basic rules of the Daily Scrum are as follows:

- The Daily Scrum should take place at the same time every workday
- The Daily Scrum should take place in the same location every day
- During the Daily Scrum developers talk about their work, not last night's hockey game
- The Daily Scrum should never last longer than 15 minutes

Daily Scrum Time and Location

When I think about developers chatting about their work, their progress and their blockers, I envision them doing it when they all get into the office in the morning. However, the Daily Scrum doesn't have to take place in the morning. It can take place at lunch-hour or even at the end of the day.

In fact, with modern teams distributed across the globe, what might be the start of the day for some members of the team might be the afternoon for others.

The Scrum Guide doesn't say what time the Daily Scrum needs to take place, only that it should take place every workday - not every day, just every *workday*.



Figure 3. The Daily Scrum is for the developers and managed by the developers. If the Scrum Master or the Product Owner attends, they do so at the behest of the developers.

Test Yourself

Which one of the following is the responsibility of the Scrum Master during the Daily Scrum?

- ☐ A) The Scrum Master should coach the developers about keeping the Daily Scrum timeboxed to 15 minutes
- ☐ B) The Scrum Master should ensure each developer gets a chance to speak
- ☐ C) The Scrum Master starts the Daily Scrum by asking the 3 standard Daily Scrum questions
- ☐ D) The Scrum Master starts the Daily Scrum by asking every developer to stand up.

The only correct option here is A.

The Daily Scrum is for the developers. It is run by developers and managed by developers.

The only responsibility the Scrum Master has with regards to the Daily Scrum is ensuring it is run in such a way that complies with the rules of Scrum. In regards to this quiz question, that means the only correct option is keeping the Daily Scrum to less than 15 minutes.

Past Scrum Guides mentioned the 3 Daily Scrum questions:

- What did you do yesterday?
- What do you plan to do today?
- Is anything impeding your progress?

These questions were removed from the 2020 Scrum Guide. They can be asked if the developers find them helpful, but they are certainly not a requirement of the Daily Scrum.

Test Yourself

The development team has decided to only work one day a week and will only hold the Daily Scrum on Mondays.

How do you react as a Scrum Master? (Choose 1)

- ☐ A) Inform the team Scrum development cannot happen only one day a week
- ☐ B) Have Human Resources talk to the development lead about their proposed work schedule
- ☐ C) Cancel the Sprint and consult the Product Owner
- ☐ D) Inform the team this is fine so long as the only workday is Monday

Option D is correct.

There's nothing in the Scrum Guide that forbids a team from working only one day a week.

The only Scrum requirement with regards to this question is that the Daily Scrum happens every *workday*. So if the team holds the Daily Scrum on the Monday, then the work should be happening on the Monday too.

The Daily Scrum is a 15-minute event for the Developers of the Scrum Team. To reduce complexity, it is held at the same time and place *every working day* of the Sprint.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

Test Yourself

The Scrum team wants to move the Daily Scrum to the atrium on Fridays to help them wind down after a busy workweek. How do you, as a Scrum Master, respond? (Choose 1)

- ☐ A) Explain to them that the Daily Scrum should always take place at the same time and place
- ☐ B) Allow the developers to be self-managed and hold their Daily Scrum in the Atrium on Fridays
- ☐ C) Confirm with the Product Owner that it is okay to change the Daily Scrum location on Fridays
- ☐ D) As the Scrum Master, work to remove any impediments standing in the way of running the Friday Scrum in the atrium

Option A is correct.

The Scrum Guide says the Daily Scrum should always take place at the same time and place.

This is true for all Scrum events. For the sake of consistency, their time and location should remain constant.

When Scrum Masters and POs do Development

Have you ever seen a Scrum Master or Product Owner do some work that becomes part of a usable Increment?

When they do, they become developers themselves.

If the Product Owner or Scrum Master is actively working on items in the Sprint Backlog, they participate as Developers.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

This is an interesting statement that answers several questions about how Scrum works.

People often wonder if a Scrum Master or Product Owner is allowed to actively do development. The answer is a big YES.

If a Scrum Team of five people is cast away on a deserted island and scrambling to build a shelter before a storm comes, everyone on that Scrum Team is going to pitch in. If your life is on the line, you're not going to refuse to help build a shelter just because you've accepted the designation of *Scrum Master*.

On small teams and startups, the Scrum Master might also be the Product Owner and they might be a developer as well. It might not be a best practice, but there's nothing that forbids it. More to the point, it might make a lot of sense in a really small development firm.

So yes, a developer can also be a Scrum Master or a Product Owner or vice versa.

The only requirement is that if a Scrum Master or Product Owner does development, they are expected to attend the Daily Scrum and participate as though they were a developer, not the Scrum Master or PO. They relinquish their Scrum Master or Product Owner accountabilities while the Daily Scrum takes place.

Who participates in the Daily Scrum?

The Developers can select whatever structure and techniques they want, as long as their Daily Scrum focuses on progress toward the Sprint Goal and produces an actionable plan for the next day of work. This creates focus and improves self-management.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

The Daily Scrum is for the developers. It should be run by the developers, organized by developers and managed by the developers. How they manage or organize it is up to them.

Anyone can *attend* the daily Scrum. If the developers want to hire a circus clown to create balloon animals while the Daily Scrum proceeds, then all the power to them. But only the developers are supposed to *participate*.

Now that's not to say the developers can't ask the Scrum Master or Product Owner a question during the Daily Scrum. That may be necessary to properly adapt their plan towards the Sprint Goal. But the Scrum Master, Product Owner and stakeholders shouldn't be active participants driving the event. The Daily Scrum must be driven by the developers.

Purpose of the Daily Scrum

Daily Scrums improve communications, identify impediments, promote quick decision-making, and consequently eliminate the need for other meetings.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

Things change from day to day. The Daily Scrum is a time for developers to deal with issues that have arisen that may delay their progress and put the Sprint Goal in jeopardy.

Hopefully, having the whole team of developers together in the Daily Scrum will help to bring about quick solutions to problems that may have arisen.

Meetings Don't Replace Pragmatic Communication

The Daily Scrum is not the only time Developers are allowed to adjust their plans.

They often meet throughout the day for more detailed discussions about adapting or re-planning the rest of Sprint's work.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 9

Don't ever think that the Daily Scrum is the only time developers are allowed to talk about their work, or that it's the only time to change the Sprint plan.

If a team of construction workers was putting up a roof, and a wind gust blew all their shingles away, would they wait until the next day's Scrum to form a new plan, or would they reformulate their plans right away?

Developers can meet with each other any time they like. They can schedule additional meetings as a group. They can meet one-on-one at each other's desks. They can have dinner together after work.

There's nothing in the Scrum Guide that restricts communication between developers, stakeholders, Product Owners, Scrum Masters, or anyone else. The only thing the Scrum Guide recommends is a few time-boxed events that guarantee opportunities for communication, transparency, and adaptation to take place.

Test Yourself

A critical bug has appeared in your code that may put the Sprint Goal at risk. What should you, as a developer, do? (Choose 1)

- ☐ A) Speak to your fellow developers as soon as possible to find a way to adapt the Sprint plan
- ☐ B) Bring the issue up in the next day's Daily Scrum meeting
- ☐ C) Inform the Scrum Master and have the Scrum Master remove the impediment
- ☐ D) Pass the issue to the Quality Assurance team and continue working on Product Backlog items

Option A is correct.

Any time an issue comes up it should be addressed as soon as possible. If a critical bug appears in your code, and you think it will impact the Sprint Goal, then meet with your fellow developers right away

and see if you can adapt by adjusting the Sprint plan.

Don't ever let the Scrum Guide and the various Scrum events and artifacts impede pragmatic thinking. If a problem arises that needs to be taken care of immediately, take care of it immediately. Don't wait for the next Scrum event to adapt.

Does Scrum Really Have Too Many Meetings?

When people say Scrum has too many meetings, I ask them which ones they think should be removed?

- Should there be no planning?
- Should there be no product reviews with clients?
- Should there be no retrospective to reflect on the Sprint?

Or is the Daily Scrum the problem? Do they think having developers talking to each other in the Daily Scrum for a few minutes every day is too much?

If a team of six or seven developers is working on a project that burns through \$250,000 worth of budget money a month, I'd say it was a problem if those developers didn't talk to each other for a few minutes every day.

Scrum doesn't have too many meetings. Scrum gets it just about right.