

Chapter 14: The Scrum Artifacts

There are three Scrum artifacts:

- The Product Backlog
- The Sprint Backlog
- The Increment of work the developers create

Scrum's artifacts represent work or value.

They are designed to maximize the transparency of key information.

Thus, everyone inspecting them has the same basis for adaptation.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 10

Answering Three Important Questions

The existence of these artifacts helps provide transparency by answering the three questions stakeholders constantly want answers to:

- What is currently being done? That's answered by the Sprint Backlog
- What needs to be done? That's answered by the Product Backlog
- What's been done? That's answered by the Increments of work that have been produced

Stakeholders get angry and upset when they don't have answers to these questions. The existence of transparent and inspectable Scrum Artifacts tends to calm the nerves of nervous stakeholders.

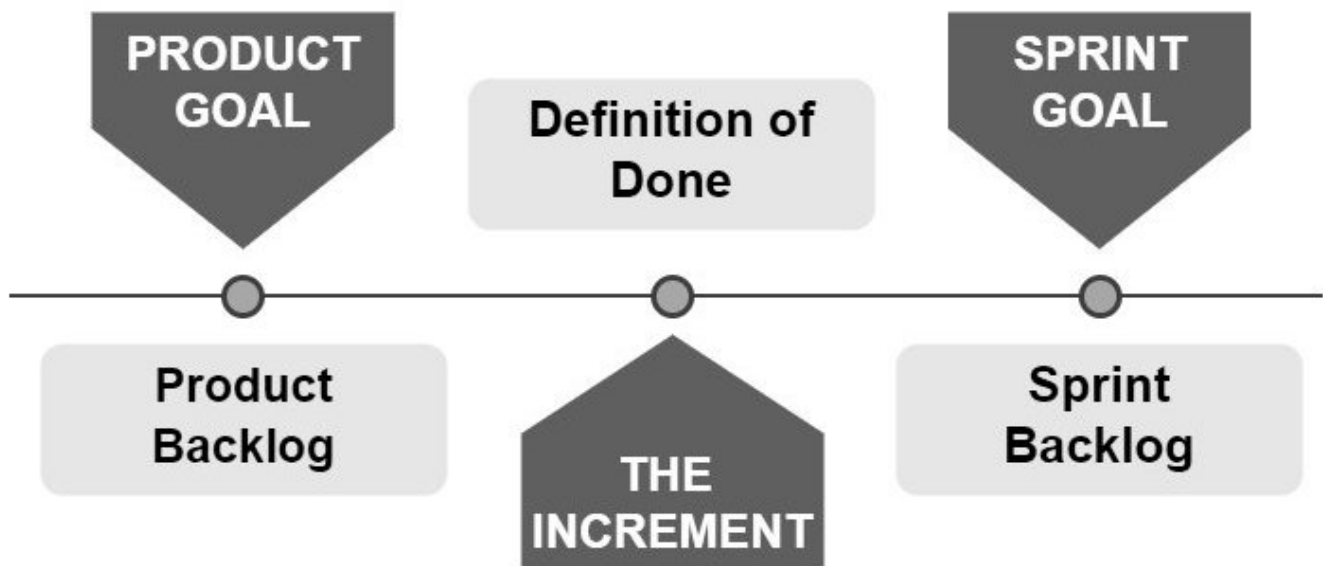


Figure 1. Each Scrum artifact, namely the Product Backlog, Sprint Backlog and the Increment, has a corresponding Scrum commitment. The Product Goal, Sprint Goal and the Increment are the Scrum commitments.

Test Yourself

Stakeholders are waiting on a new feature and they want to know if it's being actively developed this Sprint. Where would stakeholders go to find this information? (Select 1)

- ☐ A) The Product Backlog
- ☐ B) The Sprint Backlog
- ☐ C) The Definition of Done
- ☐ D) The Sprint Goal

Option B is correct.

The Sprint Backlog provides transparency into what is being worked on during the current Sprint.

Scrum Commitments

The *Scrum commitment* is something new that was added to the 2020 Scrum Guide. Each artifact now maps to a Scrum commitment.

Each artifact contains a commitment to ensure it provides information that enhances transparency and focuses against which progress can be measured:

- For the Product Backlog it is the Product Goal.
- For the Sprint Backlog it is the Sprint Goal.
- For the Increment it is the Definition of Done.

These commitments exist to reinforce empiricism and the Scrum values for the Scrum Team and their stakeholders.

— 2020 Scrum Guide page 10

Every arrow needs a target.

Without a target, an archer doesn't know where to aim. Nor would they know if they ever hit their mark.

In Scrum, artifacts are the arrows. Scrum commitments are the targets.

The Scrum Guide demands that work revolves around the following three artifacts:

- A product backlog that represents every feature to be developed;
- A list of backlog items selected for the Sprint; and
- Increments of progress that stakeholders can regularly review

Why do we need Scrum commitments?

A Scrum commitment is the evaluation criteria against which a Scrum artifact is measured. Scrum commitments improve transparency and enhance an Agile Scrum developer's focus as the project progresses.

Here's how the three Scrum commitments match up to the three Scrum artifacts mentioned above:

- The product backlog's Scrum commitment is to the product goal.
- The sprint backlog's Scrum commitment is to the sprint goal.
- The increment's Scrum commitment is to the definition of done.

Agile practitioners don't like plans. In fact, "responding to change over following a plan" is one of the four declared values stated in the Agile Manifesto.

Plans aren't inherently bad. In Scrum, every sprint begins with a sprint planning session. Planning is a requirement of the sprint framework. Not planning is definitely an Agile anti-pattern.

The problem is that when conscientious people get a plan, they do their best to follow it. Sometimes that is counter-productive, especially when conditions change, which they inevitably do.



Figure 2. Scrum commitments are the targets for the Scrum artifacts to aim at.

Scrum commitments, goals and plans

Compared to a plan, a Scrum commitment is a higher-order calling to which team members aspire. Goal-driven work is just a better motivator than plan-driven work.

The main purpose of the three commitments is to provide a clear, shared, and agreed upon goal that guides all work. The commitments also encourage participants to constantly evaluate how effectively their planned work will help the team follow through on a given commitment.

If the work, plan and commitment are misaligned, developers should sound the alarm and change the plan, because the commitment represents a higher calling than the plan.

Empiricism and the Scrum Commitments

The Scrum framework's three pillars of empiricism are:

- Transparency
- Inspection
- Adaptation

With a clear product goal, well-defined sprint goal and a concise definition of done, the software development process is more transparent and becomes more Agile.

This allows stakeholders to objectively inspect the project's progress, and immediately change and adapt when individual efforts don't align with the team's greater commitments.

Before an archer pulls back her bow, she aims at a target.

For Scrum practitioners, the Scrum commitment is the target to which their artifacts aim.

Test Yourself

The goal of every Sprint is to create an Increment that lives up to what ultimate measure? (Choose 1)

- ☐ A) Standard performance metrics
- ☐ B) Quality Assurance review
- ☐ C) The Definition of Done
- ☐ D) A conflict-free merge into the master branch

C is correct.

The Increment commits to measuring up to and conforming to the Definition of Done.

Test Yourself

How do the Scrum Artifacts reinforce empiricism for stakeholders? (Choose 1)

- ☐ A) They help the stakeholder's chart velocity
- ☐ B) They help Quality Assurance teams confirm quality metrics are achieved
- ☐ C) They provide insight into what has been done and what is being done
- ☐ D) They help stakeholders estimate the overall cost of the project

Option C is correct.

Empiricism is all about observation and experience. The Scrum Artifacts allow stakeholders to know precisely what has been done and exactly what is currently being worked on.

This provides more empirical evidence of the state of the project than burndown charts or cumulative flow diagrams.

Test Yourself

The Scrum Artifacts exist to reinforce empiricism only for the Scrum Team.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

This is false. The Scrum Artifacts are accessible to the Stakeholders as well as the Scrum Team. They help reinforce empiricism for everyone involved in the project.