


Kanban key concepts

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Azure Boards | Azure DevOps Server 2019 | TFS 2018 | TFS 2017 | TFS 2015 | TFS 2013

This article provides a short dictionary of terms and available tools used in tracking work using Kanban boards and Kanban methods. See also:

- [Agile glossary](#)
- [Work item field index](#)
- [Project management and navigation glossary](#)

Agile tools

A suite of web-based tools used to track work and support Agile methodologies. Agile tools support the core Agile methods—Scrum and Kanban—used by software development teams today. Learn more: [About Agile tools and Agile project management](#).

Blocker

An issue that prevents work from progressing. You can highlight work that is blocked by using tags and changing the card color. Learn more: [Customize cards](#), [Define style rules to highlight cards](#).

Bottleneck

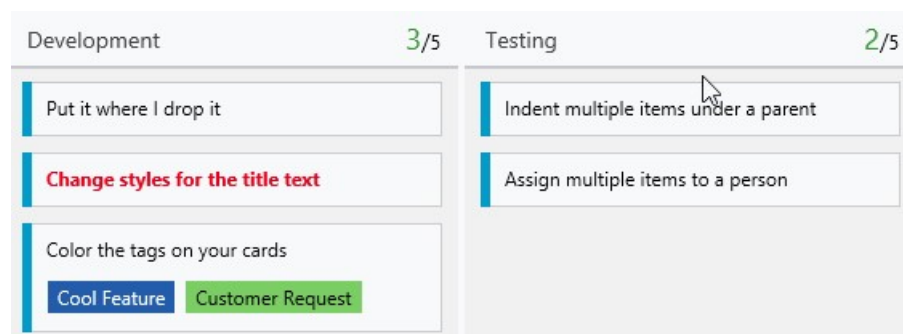
A constraint in the system that limits the flow of work. Identifying bottlenecks makes it easier to reduce their impact and provides a mechanism for controlling work flowing through the process. Learn more: [Split columns](#), [Identify bottlenecks](#).

Bugs

A type of work item that records a potential source of dissatisfaction with the product. The common name of a work item type for tracking code defects. Each team can choose how they want to manage bugs. Some teams like to track bugs along with requirements on the backlog. Other teams like to track bugs as tasks performed in support of a requirement. The bugs then appear on their Taskboard. Learn more: [Manage bugs](#).

Card reordering

Card reordering is a configurable setting for a team's Kanban board that either forces cards to maintain the backlog priority when dragged and dropped on the board, or allows the priority order to change. Learn more: [Reorder cards](#).

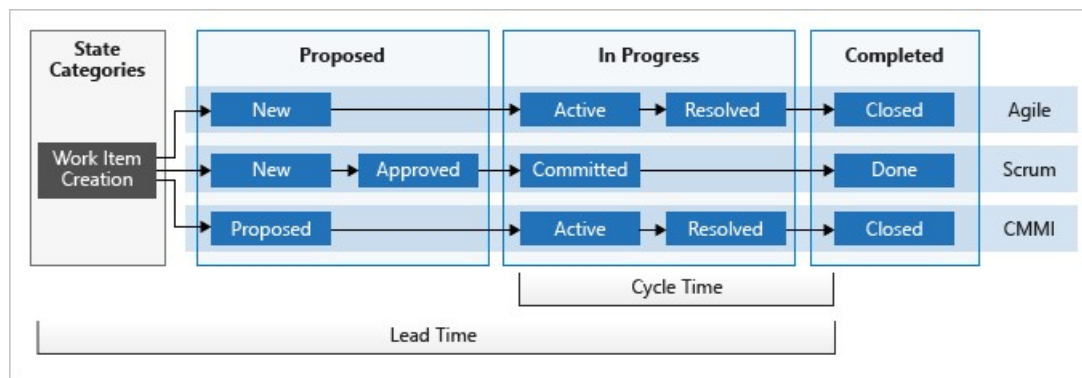


Cumulative flow diagram (CFD)

The built-in CFD chart shows the count of items in each Kanban column for the past 30 weeks or less. From this chart you can gain an idea of the amount of work in progress and lead time. Work in progress counts unfinished requirements. Learn more: [Cumulative flow, lead time, and cycle time guidance](#).

Cycle time

Cycle time is the time calculated for a work item from first entering an *In Progress* category state to entering a *Completed* [state category](#). Learn more: [Cumulative flow, lead time, and cycle time guidance](#).



Definition of Done

Criteria that a team specifies for each stage of work to share and standardize on what constitutes work being done at that stage. Learn more: [Kanban best practices, working software and the Definition of Done](#).

Kanban board

An interactive, electronic sign board that supports visualization of the flow of work from concept to completion and lean methods. Azure DevOps provides a Kanban board for each product and portfolio backlog. Learn more: [Kanban basics](#) and [Kanban board features and epics](#).

Kanban columns

A Kanban column maps to a stage of work. The default columns map to the workflow states of the work item types which appear on the Kanban board. You configure the columns to map [workflow states](#) of your team. Learn more: [Kanban basics](#), [Map the flow of work](#).

Lead time

Lead time is the time calculated for a work item from first entering a *Proposed* category state to entering a *Completed* [state category](#). Learn more: [Cumulative flow, lead time, and cycle time guidance](#).

Live updates

Live updates is a Kanban board view option which when enabled automatically refreshes the Kanban board as other team members move or reorder cards. Learn more: [Enable live updates](#).

Issues or impediments

A type of work item that helps track unplanned activities. Resolving an issue or impediment requires more work beyond what was scheduled based on actual requirements. Using the issue (Agile or CMMI process) or impediment (Scrum process) work item type helps you track and manage these issues until you can resolve and close them. Learn more: [Manage issues and impediments](#).

Product backlog

An interactive list of work items that corresponds to a team's project plan or roadmap for what the team plans

to deliver. The product backlog supports prioritizing work, forecasting work by sprints, and quickly linking work to portfolio backlog items. You can define your backlog items and then manage their status using the Kanban board.

Each product backlog can be customized by a team. Learn more: [Create your backlog](#).

Product backlog item

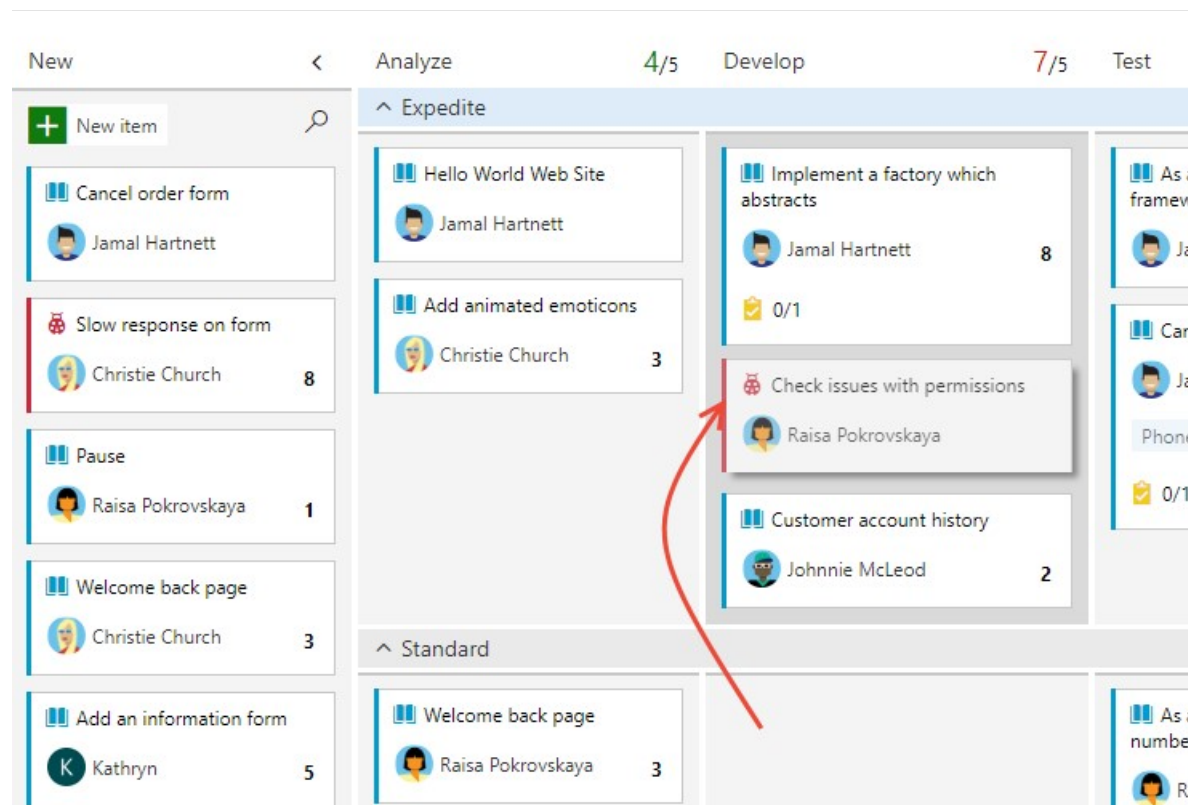
A type of work item that defines the applications, requirements, and elements that teams plan to create. Product owners typically define and stack rank product backlog items which are defined with the Scrum process. Learn more: [Scrum process work item types and workflow](#).

Portfolio backlog

An interactive list of work items, similar to the product backlog, that supports organizing or grouping work under features, epics, or scenarios. Portfolio backlogs work similarly to product backlogs in that you can prioritize work and view the tree hierarchy of work. Learn more: [Define features and epics](#).

Swimlanes

A swimlane is a configurable row on a Kanban board, usually used to support different service class levels of work. Learn more: [Expedite work with swimlanes](#).



Split columns

Split columns lets your team implement a pull mechanism within the workflow process. Without split columns, teams push work forward, to signal that they've completed their stage of work. However, pushing it to the next stage doesn't necessarily mean that a team member immediately starts work on that item. With split

columns, your team knows exactly how many items sit idle, waiting for work to begin. Learn more: [Split columns](#).

Backlog	Analyze 4/5		Develop 6/5		Test 4/5		Done
	Doing	Done	Doing	Done	Doing	Done	
+ New item							

Task checklists

A task is a type of work item used to track work required to complete a user story or product backlog item. You can add tasks from your Kanban board which appear as a checklist of work to be done. As you complete a task, you can update it's status by checking the checkbox for the task. Learn more: [Add task checklists](#).

Task switching

Task switching, also referred to as *context switching* or *multitasking*, is when a team member shifts their attention among different tasks. Limiting task switching can allow a person to work more efficiently by minimizing the amount of time required to redirect cognitive function to a new activity.

User story

A type of work item that defines the applications, requirements, and elements that teams plan to create. Product owners typically define and stack rank user stories. User story is defined with the Agile process. Learn more: [Agile process work item types and workflow](#).

WIP limit

A WIP limit is a constraint that a team applies to one or more workflow stages to help prevent potential bottlenecks that hinder the continuous flow of work in the system. Learn more: [Work in Progress limits](#).

Work in Process (WIP)

Work that has been started but isn't done or completed.

Workflow states

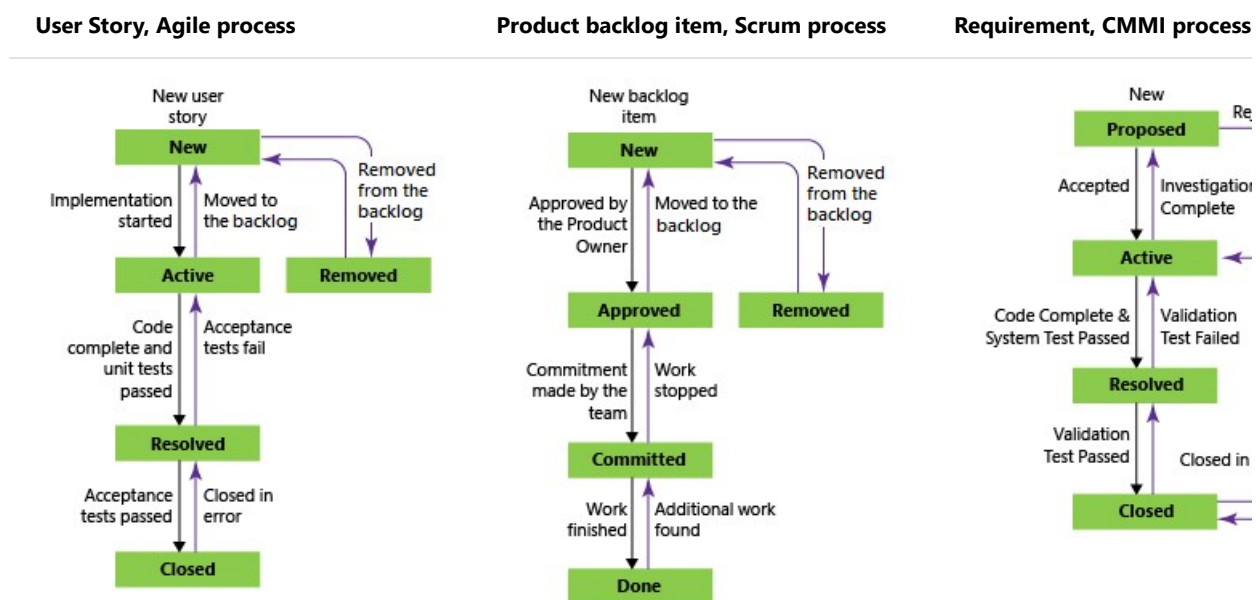
Workflow states are defined for each work item type to support tracking the status of a work item, from its creation to it's completion. These states define the workflow process: actions, steps, or stages that a piece of work goes through from inception to completion.

Examples of workflow states for the three system processes

User Story, Agile process

Product backlog item, Scrum process

Requirement, CMMI process



You can customize your workflow states, adding states, renaming states, and changing state transitions and reasons. Learn more: [Customize the workflow](#).

Workflow state categories

State categories determine how the Kanban board treat each workflow state. The state categories used by the backlogs are *Proposed*, *In Progress*, *Resolved*, and *Completed*. Learn more: [Workflow states and state categories](#).

Related articles

- [Refine your backlog](#)
- [Kanban best practices](#)
- [About boards and Kanban](#)