User Story Taboo

Participants

4 - 16

Duration

- about 60 - 90 minutes (normal version)
- about 90 - 120 minutes (extended version)

Goal and description

The goal of the game is to make participants understand how they can write good user stories.

User Story Taboo is based on the board game "Tabu" where teams have to describe words and terms without using certain forbidden words.

The participants will write user stories but they will be forbidden to use certain words. This is to show participants that no one needs user stories like "As a server I want to...". They shall learn the pros when not only defining the functionality but also who it is for and how he/she will benefit from it.

We are doing this by writing stories for an extended version of battleship. The rules for battleship are well known, thus we can concentrate more on writing the stories instead of discussing the rules of battleship.

Forbidden words

A	B	C
User	better	faster
end-user	operator	client
customer	server	to look at
work	company	stakeholder
program	system	product owner
game producer	easy	

Preparation

- Print requirements.md)
- Write forbidden words on flipchart or print them

Setup

- Divide participants into groups of max. 4 people
- Give each group a part of the requirements. Ideally each group has the same amount of requirements

Round 1: Write user stories

Explain to the participants that good user stories describe **who** wants to have something, **what** he/she wants and **why** he/she wants it. In my experience providing the common template `"As <role> I want to have <functionality> so that I have <value>"` helps the participants in writing their first user stories. Show and explain the forbidden words.

Now let the participants write their user stories. Sometimes this takes 2-3 iterations until the stories meet all the requirements (who, what, why) and omit all the forbidden words.

Round 2: Acceptance criteria

Explain acceptance criteria.

Let groups select 2 user stories from round 1 and make them write acceptance criteria for them (encourage participants to be creative here :)

Extended Version: Groups don't select the stories but each group writes the acceptance criteria for all their stories from round 1.

Runde 3: Identify epics

Explain epics and the lifecycle of a requirement (Requirement -> Epic -> User Story -> Task, etc.). The rules from the ebook "5 Rules for Writing Effective User Stories" are a good basis and orientation.

Let participants take a look at the written stories and make them identify epics and user stories.

Extended version

Round 4: Split stories or epics

Explain how to identify stories that are too large (e.g. words like and, or, but, etc.)

Let groups select 2 user stories or epics and make them split these stories/epics.

Backlog-Management

Show and explain participants possibilities to manage the backlog. Some possibilities:

- Impact Mapping
- Relative Weight Priorisierung

- [Agile Strategy Map](#)