HOW TO SPLIT A USER STORY

1 PREPARE THE INPUT STORY

Does the big story satisfy INVEST* (except, perhaps, small)?

NO → Combine it with another story or otherwise reformulate it to get a good, if large, starting story.

YES ↓

Is the story size ⅒ to ⅙ of your velocity?

You're done.

NO → Continue. You need to split it.

2 APPLY THE SPLITTING PATTERNS

start here

last resort

WORKFLOW STEPS

Can you split the story so you do the beginning and end of the workflow first and enhance with stories from the middle of the workflow?

Can you take a thin slice through the workflow first and enhance it with more stories later?

Does the story describe a workflow?

DEFER PERFORMANCE

Could you split the story to just make it work first and then enhance it to satisfy the non-functional requirement?

Does the story get much of its complexity from satisfying non-functional requirements like performance?

OPERATIONS

Can you split the operations into separate stories?

Does the story include multiple operations? (e.g. is it about "managing" or "configuring" something?)

BUSINESS RULE VARIATIONS

Can you split the story so you do a subset of the rules first and enhance with additional rules later?

Does the story have a variety of business rules? (e.g. is there a domain term in the story like "flexible dates" that suggests several variations?)

SIMPLE/COMPLEX

Could you split the story to do that simple core first and enhance it with later stories?

Does the story have a simple core that provides most of the value and/or learning?

Does the story do the same thing to different kinds of data?

VARIATIONS IN DATA

Can you split the story to process one kind of data first and enhance with the other kinds later?

MAJOR EFFORT

Could you group the later stories and defer the decision about which story comes first?

When you apply the obvious split, is whichever story you do first the most difficult?

Does the story get the same kind of data via multiple interfaces?

INTERFACE VARIATIONS

Can you split the story to handle data from one interface first and enhance with the others later?

Does the story have a complex interface?

Is there a simple version you could do first?

BREAK OUT A SPIKE

Are you still baffled about how to split the story?

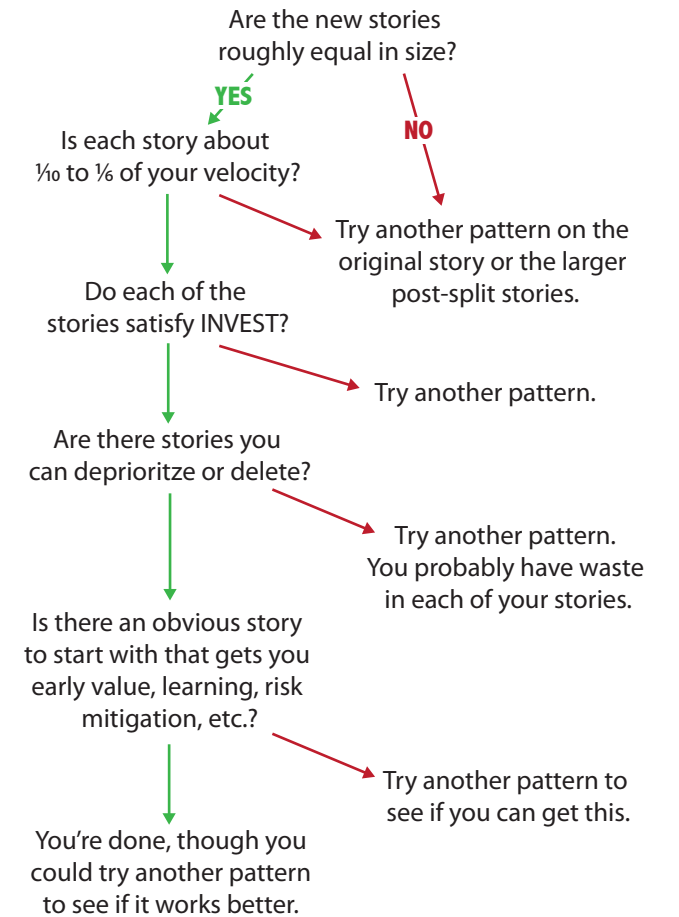Can you find a small piece you understand well enough to start?

Write that story first, build it, and start again at the top of this process.

Can you define the 1-3 questions most holding you back?

Write a spike with those questions, do the minimum to answer them, and start again at the top of this process

Take a break and try again.

3 EVALUATE THE SPLIT

Are the new stories roughly equal in size?

YES ↓ | **NO** →

Try another pattern on the original story or the larger post-split stories.

Is each story about ⅒ to ⅙ of your velocity?

Do each of the stories satisfy INVEST?

Try another pattern.

Are there stories you can deprioritze or delete?

Try another pattern. You probably have waste in each of your stories.

Is there an obvious story to start with that gets you early value, learning, risk mitigation, etc.?

Try another pattern to see if you can get this.

You're done, though you could try another pattern to see if it works better.

* INVEST - Stories should be:
Independent
Negotiable
Valuable
Estimable
Small
Testable