

The Components of a Gantt Chart

The features in a Gantt chart and how they help you manage projects

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While a simple to-do list may be sufficient for completing small projects around the house when it comes to project management, a more detailed plan of action is usually needed. One of the most popular and practical ways to manage the timing of all of the tasks of a project is to use a Gantt chart.

project and how they relate to each other over time.

A Gantt chart shows all of the tasks that need to be done, the amount of time each task is expected to take, the time frames in which individual tasks are to be completed, and the relationship between various tasks. This way, everything gets done on schedule, and you never waste time waiting for a task to be completed that should have been done already.

What Are the Parts of a Gantt Chart?

Gantt charts are made up of nine components.

- 1. Dates.** One of the main components of a Gantt chart, the dates allow project managers to see not only when the entire project will begin and end, but also when each task will take place. These are displayed along the top of the chart.
- 2. Tasks.** Large projects always consist of a large number of sub-tasks. A Gantt chart helps project managers keep track of all of the sub-tasks in a project, so nothing is forgotten or delayed. Tasks are listed down the left side.
- 3. Bars.** Once the sub-tasks have been listed, bars are used to show the time frame in which each task should be completed. This helps ensure that every sub-task is done on schedule so the entire project will be completed on time.
- 4. Milestones.** Milestones are those tasks that are instrumental to a project's completion and success. Unlike the minor details, which also have to be done, completing a milestone offers a sense of satisfaction and forward motion. On a Gantt chart, milestones are displayed as diamonds (or, sometimes, a different shape) at the end of a particular taskbar.
- 5. Arrows.** While some of your tasks can be done at any time, others must be completed before or after another sub-task can begin or end. These dependencies are indicated by small arrows between the taskbars on a Gantt chart.

taskbars to represent the portion of each task that has already been completed.

7. Vertical Line Marker. Another way to monitor your project's progress, a vertical line marker indicates the current date on the chart. It helps you manage your time effectively as you can see at a glance how much you have left to do and if you are on track to complete the project on time.

8. Task ID. In today's fast-paced business world, you likely have several tasks going on at the same time. Including the task ID on the Gantt chart helps everyone involved to quickly identify the task you are talking about.

9. Resources. While not every Gantt chart lists the names of the people who will be working on it, if your project will be completed by a number of individuals, listing names and the tasks that are assigned to them can be incredibly helpful. Identifying and assigning resources to each task helps you effectively manage people, tools, and skills to complete each project on time.

Project Management Tools and Gantt Charts

When Gantt charts were initially developed, they were written by hand, making changing or updating the chart laborious. Thankfully, with today's current project management software, project managers can easily add, subtract and modify tasks without needing to adjust the entire chart by hand.

There are many popular project management tools and software that make use of Gantt charts or task structures. These can be used for your business, personal, and career development needs.

When managing a project, you need to make sure all of the individual tasks are completed in a timely and efficient manner. A Gantt chart will help you do just that.
