CrumbScale

Troubleshooting CrumbScale Step1 - Ordering Step

I don't know which Story to pick first
- When picking Stories from the unordered list, simply pick the top one. It is actually preferable for the unordered list to be randomly shuffled, keeping us from the temptation to insert more than one Story at a time or automatically dropping a new Story next to the last inserted Story.

Not sure where to insert a Story
- Look 4-5 positions down for something clearly smaller and come back up or look 4-5 positions up for something clearly bigger and come down from there. In a sense, finding a clear upper and lower bound and working your way toward the middle.
- Try to find more specific reasons why a Story is bigger or smaller than another like this Story doesn't involve the database; this Story touches a part of the system which we are less familiar with; this Story triggers a series of code-refactoring.
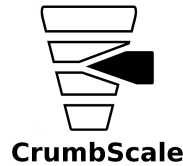
Some stories are unclear
- With the help of the PO and the Dev Team expertise, try to clarify the Story or tweak the features description to find an agreeable scenario. We assume (and highly recommend) the Dev Team has participated in the Stories creation process and already understands the intent behind each item of the Backlog. Without this, it will take a long time to explain each Story from scratch.
- Estimate using the worst-case scenario. This will likely result in an Epic (large Story) that will need to be split when the time comes during the Production Period.
- If the Story is part of the MVP or a major risk, you should right away create a Spike Story to clarify the situation. This Spike must be clear and easy to estimate.
- If a Story is taking too long to estimate, put it aside and come back to it once you are done with the rest.

It's taking too much time
- This step should take less than 4 minutes per Story even for first-time users. We assume (and highly recommend) the Dev Team has participated in the Stories creation process and already understands the intent behind each item of the Backlog. Without this, it will take a long time to explain each Story from scratch.
- You are maybe sharing too much information. As you go up the list, for each Story, you only need enough information to answer the question "Is this new Story bigger than that other one?" Getting in too much detail will only slow the process.
- Maybe the team doesn't have enough expertise to estimate this Backlog. An expert collaborator might be needed to help estimate it and, later on, support them during actual development.

The scale is not smooth
- You may not have enough Stories (i.e. less than 40). In this non-optimal case, it is likely that your scale is not smooth. Even though it is usable, it is recommended to bonify the scale with more Stories as new ones appear during the Production Period. Once you have 40-60 Stories in your scale, it should be smooth and you can stop adding stories to it.
- Stories were probably not inserted in the list by the very bottom and moved up by asking the question "Is this bigger than that?" Find the misplaced Stories and re-insert them the proper way.

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Troubleshooting CrumbScale Step2 - Effort distribution step

Mostly small stories of 3 points or less
- This indicates a lack of complexity and unknowns in the project. Even though it is OK to continue using Scrum, a large set of known work is better managed through a Kanban process.

MVP Stories are in the Epic range (20 or more)
- Those Epics must be split and estimated using the CrumbScale estimation tool.

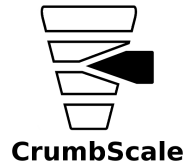**Mostly large stories of 8 points or more**
- The Dev Team may have underdeveloped skills for Story creation and Story splitting.
- By overestimating the small work, the team may have incremented too quickly through the lower part of the scale (i.e. through 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8). If this is the case, redoing the points estimation exercise should fix the problem. Start back with the crumbs and work your way up, hopefully at a slower pace.
- Maybe the team doesn't have enough expertise to estimate this Backlog. An expert collaborator might be needed to help estimate it and later on during actual development.
- This may simply be an enormous project and it would be better to split more of the important or riskier Stories. This will help with planning and predictability.

Some values underrepresented or not present in the scale
- Later on in the project, as you use the CrumbScale tool, if you find new Stories that could represent those underrepresented values, take the time to complete the scale until the values 1 to 13 are represented by 4-5 Stories each.

It's taking too much time
- This process is normally much faster than step 1 (ordering by size) and should take less than 2 minutes per Story even for first-time users. Same as in Step 1, we assume (and highly recommend) the Dev Team has participated in the Stories creation process and already understands the intent behind each item of the Backlog. Without this, it will take a long time to explain each Story from scratch.
- You are maybe sharing too much information. As you go up the list, for each Story, you only need enough information to answer the question "Is this next Story the same size or [almost] twice as big as the last Story?" Getting in too much detail will only slow the process.
- Maybe the team doesn't have enough expertise to estimate this Backlog. An expert collaborator might be needed to help estimate it and later on during actual development.

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Troubleshooting CrumbScale - Estimation Tool

The scale has less than 40 items
- Later on in the project, as you use the CrumbScale tool, if you find new Stories that could represent the underrepresented values, take the time to bonify the scale until the values 1 to 13 are represented by 4-5 Stories each.

The new Story is similar to 2 stories of two different values
- If, for example, the new Story falls between the values 3 and 5, ask the two following questions; "Is this new Story the same size or [almost] twice as big as the 3 points Story?" and "Is this new Story the same size or [almost] twice as small as the 5 points Story?"

Estimating with the scale takes longer than 30-60 seconds
- Focus only on finding similar work in the list. Do not go into details.
- Don't try to find an exact place in the scale for the new Story. If a zone of 4 or 5 Stories looks about right and they all have the same effort value (e.g. they all have a value of 5), simply assign that effort value to the new Story.
- A Story of a new type may not be comparable with the content of the CrumbScale tool (e.g. new technology, new type of work, new expertise, ...). Somebody on the Scrum Team who is familiar with the content of the CrumbScale tool and knows this new type of work must do the points estimation. Similar to the process used to distribute the initial effort points, insert this new Story from the bottom of the list and move up the list by asking "It this new Story bigger than that other one?" until you find the right position and thus the right effort points given by the neighboring Stories. It would be a good practice to represent this new type of work in the CrumbScale by modifying the tool as new Stories of this type are created.
- A big change in technology or vision may create a new set of Stories for which the current CrumbScale tool makes no sense. In this extreme case, you may be forced to create a new CrumbScale tool using the new batch of stories.

More Info

[GitHub](#)

[Here's a 10 minutes video explaining CrumbScale](#)

Get more information by reading [Rally-Point Backlog](#),
available on Amazon ([eBook](#) or [paperback](#))