What are the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) phases?

There are various software development approaches defined and designed which are used/employed during development process of software, these approaches are also referred as “Software Development Process Models” (e.g. Waterfall model,incremental model, V-model, iterative model, etc.). Each process model follows a particular life cycle in order to ensure success in process of software development.

Software life cycle models describe phases of the software cycle and the order in which those phases are executed. Each phase produces deliverables required by the next phase in the life cycle. Requirements are translated into design. Code is produced according to the design which is called development phase. After coding and development the testing verifies the deliverable of the implementation phase against requirements.

There are following six phases in every Software development life cycle model:

1. Requirement gathering and analysis
2. Design
3. Implementation or coding
4. Testing
5. Deployment
6. Maintenance

1) Requirement gathering and analysis: Business requirements are gathered in this phase. This phase is the main focus of the project managers and stake holders. Meetings with managers, stake holders and users are held in order to determine the requirements like; Who is going to use the system? How will they use the system? What data should be input into the system? What data should be output by the system? These are general questions that get answered during a requirements gathering phase. After requirement gathering these requirements are analyzed for their validity and the possibility of incorporating the requirements in the system to be development is also studied.

Finally, a Requirement Specification document is created which serves the purpose of guideline for the next phase of the model.

2) Design: In this phase the system and software design is prepared from the requirement specifications which were studied in the first phase. System Design helps in specifying hardware and system requirements and also helps in defining overall system architecture. The system design specifications serve as input for the next phase of the model.

3) Implementation / Coding: On receiving system design documents, the work is divided in modules/units and actual coding is started. Since, in this phase the code is produced so it is the main focus for the developer. This is the longest phase of the software development life cycle.

4) Testing: After the code is developed it is tested against the requirements to make sure that the product is actually solving the needs addressed and gathered during the requirements phase. During this phase unit testing, integration testing, system testing, acceptance testing are done.

5) Deployment: After successful testing the product is delivered / deployed to the customer for their use.

6) Maintenance: Once when the customers starts using the developed system then the actual problems comes up and needs to be solved from time to time. This process where the care is taken for the developed product is known as maintenance.

What are the Software Development Models?

The development models are the various processes or methodologies that are being selected for the development of the project depending on the project's aims and goals. There are many development life cycle models that have been developed in order to achieve different required objectives. The models specify the various stages of the process and the order in which they are carried out.

The selection of model has very high impact on the testing that is carried out. It will define the what, where and when of our planned testing, influence regression testing and largely determines which test techniques to use.

There are various Software development models or methodologies. They are as follows:

1. Waterfall model
2. V model
3. Incremental model
4. RAD model
5. Agile model
6. Iterative model
7. Spiral model

Choosing right model for developing of the software product or application is very important. Based on the model the development and testing processes are carried out.

Different companies based on the software application or product, they select the type of development model whichever suits to their application. But these days in market the ‘Agile Methodology’ is the most used model. ‘Waterfall Model’ is the very old model. In ‘Waterfall Model’ testing starts only after the development is completed. Because of which there are many defects and failures which are reported at the end. So,the cost of fixing these issues are high. Hence, these days people are preferring ‘Agile Model’. In ‘Agile Model’ after every sprint there is a demo-able feature to the customer. Hence customer can see the features whether they are satisfying their need or not.

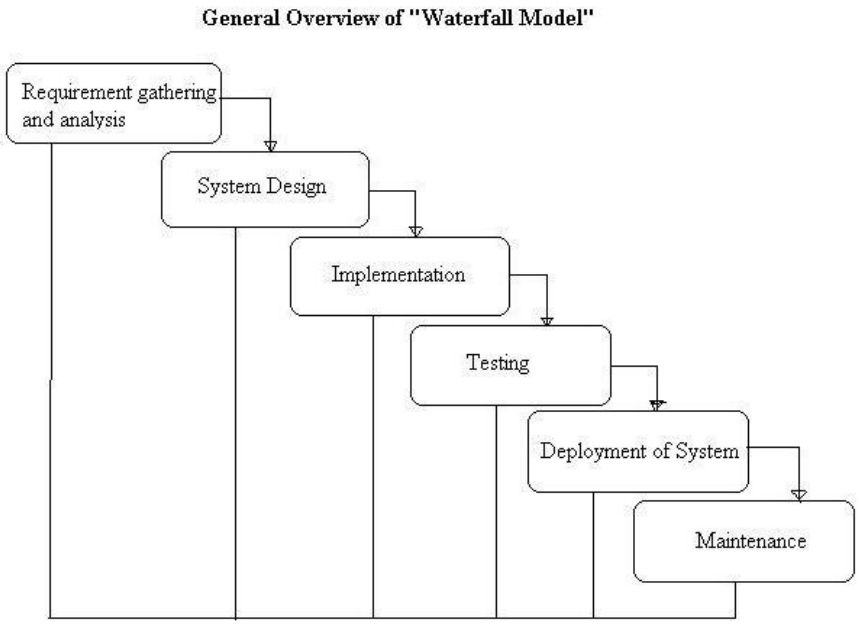
‘V-model’ is also used by many of the companies in their product. ‘V-model’ is nothing but ‘Verification’ and ‘Validation’ model. In ‘V-model’ the developer’s life cycle and tester’s life cycle are mapped to each other. In this model testing is done side by side of the development.

Likewise ‘Incremental model’, ‘RAD model’, ‘Iterative model’ and ‘Spiral model’ are also used based on the requirement of the customer and need of the product.

What is Waterfall model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

The Waterfall Model was first Process Model to be introduced. It is also referred to as a **linear-sequential life cycle model**. It is very simple to understand and use. In a waterfall model, each phase must be completed fully before the next phase can begin. This type of model is basically used for the for the project which is small and there are no uncertain requirements. At the end of each phase, a review takes place to determine if the project is on the right path and whether or not to continue or discard the project. In this model the testing starts only after the development is complete. In **waterfall model phases** do not overlap.

Diagram of Waterfall-model:



Advantages of waterfall model:

- This model is simple and easy to understand and use.
- It is easy to manage due to the rigidity of the model – each phase has specific deliverables and a review process.
- In this model phases are processed and completed one at a time. Phases do not overlap.
- Waterfall model works well for smaller projects where requirements are very well understood.

Disadvantages of waterfall model:

- Once an application is in the testing stage, it is very difficult to go back and change something that was not well-thought out in the concept stage.
- No working software is produced until late during the life cycle.
- High amounts of risk and uncertainty.
- Not a good model for complex and object-oriented projects.
- Poor model for long and ongoing projects.
- Not suitable for the projects where requirements are at a moderate to high risk of changing.

When to use the waterfall model:

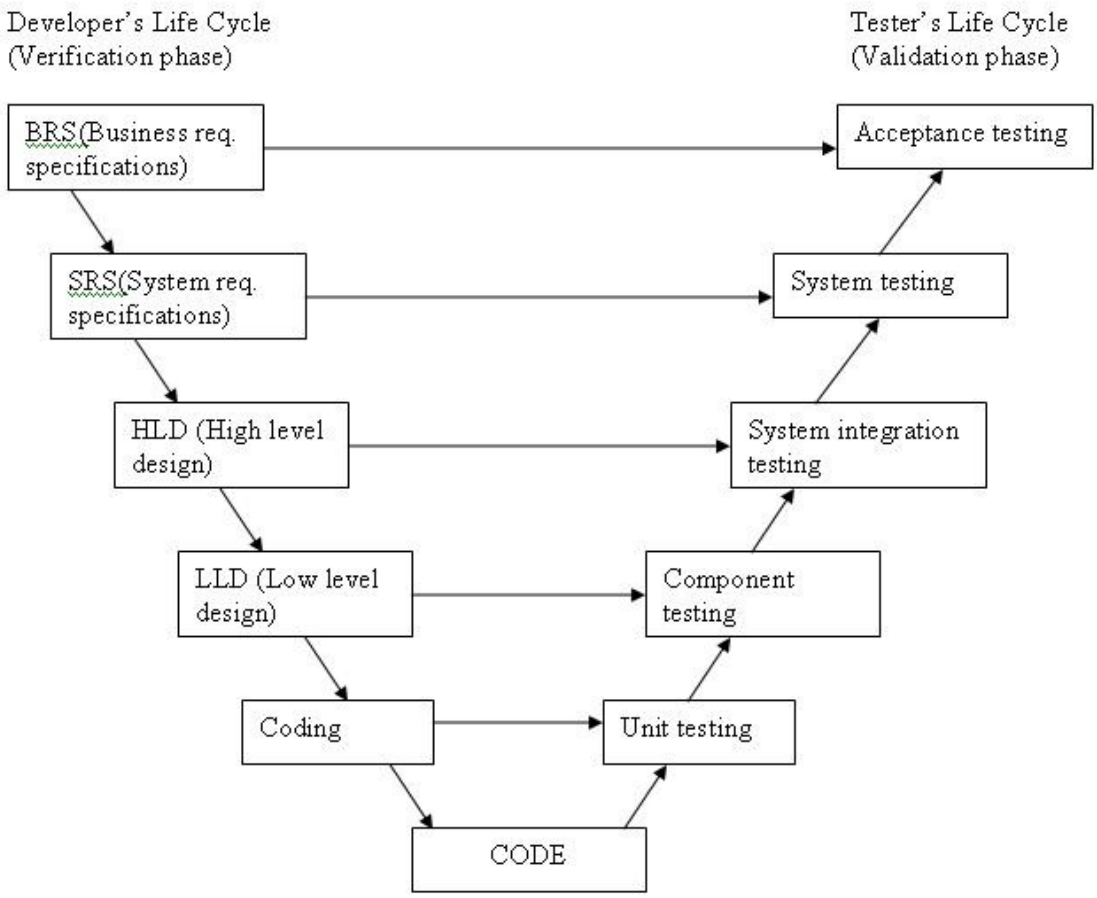
- This model is used only when the requirements are very well known, clear and fixed.
- Product definition is stable.
- Technology is understood.
- There are no ambiguous requirements
- Ample resources with required expertise are available freely
- The project is short.

Very less customer enter action is involved during the development of the product. Once the product is ready then only it can be demoed to the end users. Once the product is developed and if any failure occurs then the cost of fixing such issues are very high, because we need to update everywhere from document till the logic.

What is V-model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

V- model means Verification and Validation model. Just like the waterfall model, the V-Shaped life cycle is a sequential path of execution of processes. Each phase must be completed before the next phase begins. Testing of the product is planned in parallel with a corresponding phase of development.

Diagram of V-model:



The various phases of the V-model are as follows:

Requirements like BRS and SRS begin the life cycle model just like the waterfall model. But, in this model before development is started, a system test plan is created. The test plan focuses on meeting the functionality specified in the requirements gathering.

The high-level design (HLD) phase focuses on system architecture and design. It provide overview of solution, platform, system, product and service/process. Anintegration test plan is created in this phase as well in order to test the pieces of the software systems ability to work together.

The low-level design (LLD) phase is where the actual software components are designed. It defines the actual logic for each and every component of the system. Class diagram with all the methods and relation between classes comes under LLD. Component tests are created in this phase as well.

The implementation phase is, again, where all coding takes place. Once coding is complete, the path of execution continues up the right side of the V where the test plans developed earlier are now put to use.

Coding: This is at the bottom of the V-Shape model. Module design is converted into code by developers.

Advantages of V-model:

- Simple and easy to use.
- Testing activities like planning, test designing happens well before coding. This saves a lot of time. Hence higher chance of success over the waterfall model.
- Proactive defect tracking – that is defects are found at early stage.
- Avoids the downward flow of the defects.
- Works well for small projects where requirements are easily understood.

Disadvantages of V-model:

- Very rigid and least flexible.
- Software is developed during the implementation phase, so no early prototypes of the software are produced.

- If any changes happen in midway, then the test documents along with requirement documents has to be updated.

When to use the V-model:

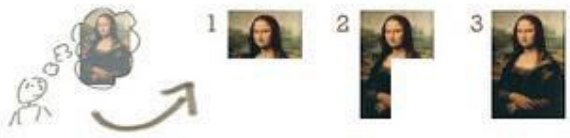
- The V-shaped model should be used for small to medium sized projects where requirements are clearly defined and fixed.
- The V-Shaped model should be chosen when ample technical resources are available with needed technical expertise.

High confidence of customer is required for choosing the V-Shaped model approach. Since, no prototypes are produced, there is a very high risk involved in meeting customer expectations.

What is Incremental model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

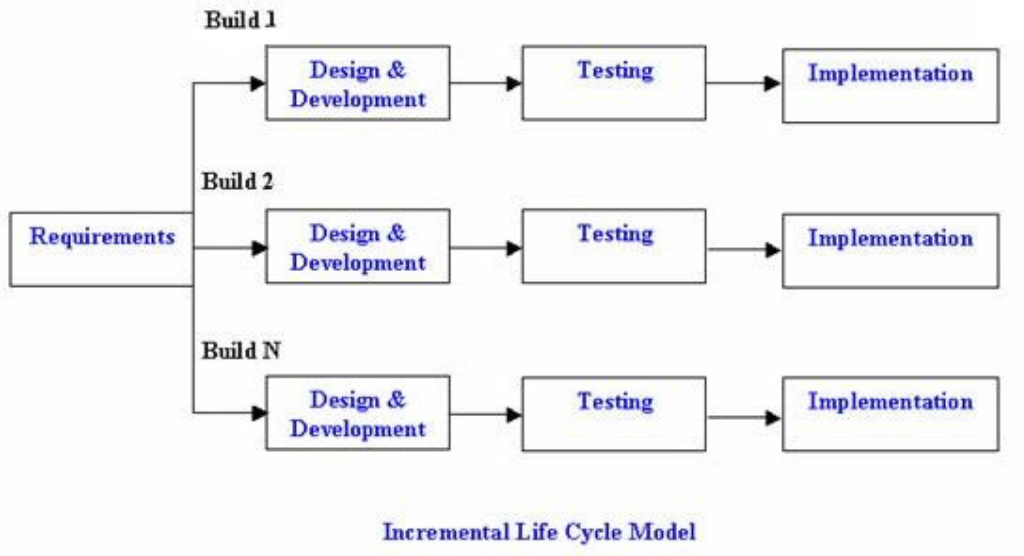
In incremental model the whole requirement is divided into various builds. Multiple development cycles take place here, making the life cycle a "multi-waterfall" cycle. Cycles are divided up into smaller, more easily managed modules. Each module passes through the requirements, design, implementation and testing phases. A working version of software is produced during the first module, so you have working software early on during the software life cycle. Each subsequent release of the module adds function to the previous release. The process continues till the complete system is achieved.

For example:



In the diagram above when we work **incrementally** we are adding piece by piece but expect that each piece is fully finished. Thus keep on adding the pieces until it's complete. As in the image above a person has thought of the application. Then he started building it and in the first iteration the first module of the application or product is totally ready and can be demoed to the customers. Likewise in the second iteration the other module is ready and integrated with the first module. Similarly, in the third iteration the whole product is ready and integrated. Hence, the product got ready step by step.

Diagram of Incremental model:



Incremental Life Cycle Model

Advantages of Incremental model:

- Generates working software quickly and early during the software life cycle.
- This model is more flexible – less costly to change scope and requirements.
- It is easier to test and debug during a smaller iteration.
- In this model customer can respond to each built.
- Lowers initial delivery cost.
- Easier to manage risk because risky pieces are identified and handled during it'd iteration.

Disadvantages of Incremental model:

- Needs good planning and design.
- Needs a clear and complete definition of the whole system before it can be broken down and built incrementally.
- Total cost is higher than waterfall.

When to use the Incremental model:

- This model can be used when the requirements of the complete system are clearly defined and understood.
- Major requirements must be defined; however, some details can evolve with time.
- There is a need to get a product to the market early.

- A new technology is being used
- Resources with needed skill set are not available
- There are some high risk features and goals.

What is RAD model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

RAD model is Rapid Application Development model. It is a type of incremental model. In RAD model the components or functions are developed in parallel as if they were mini projects. The developments are time boxed, delivered and then assembled into a working prototype. This can quickly give the customer something to see and use and to provide feedback regarding the delivery and their requirements.

Diagram of RAD-Model:

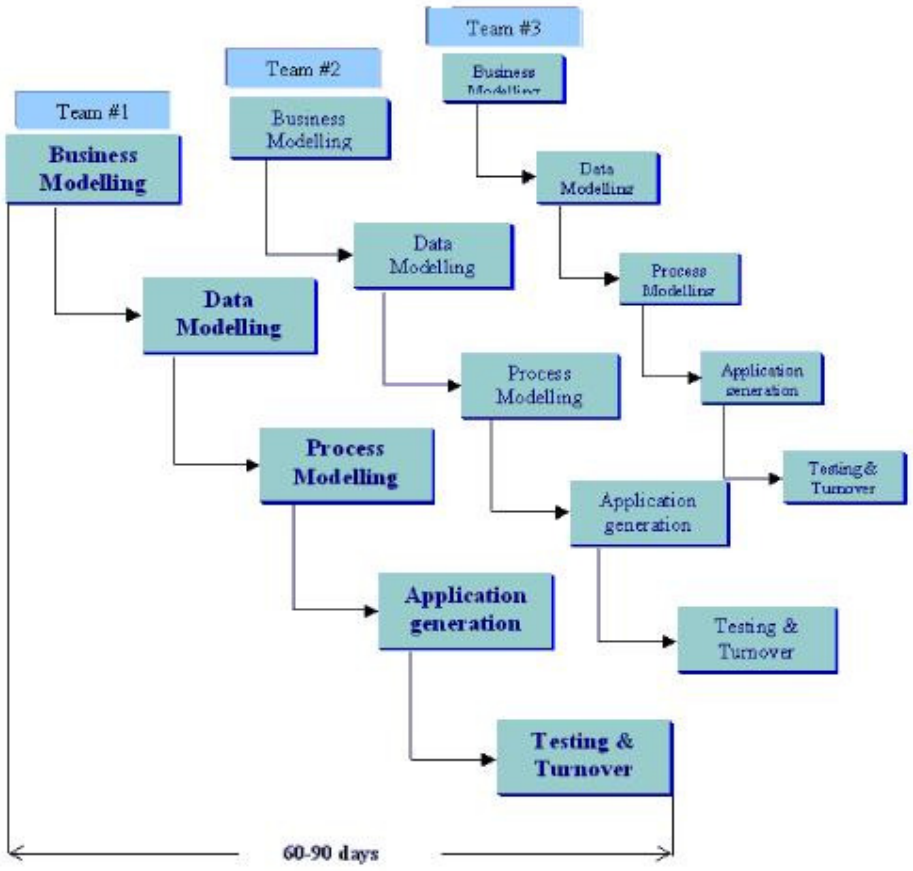


Figure 1.5 – RAD Model

The phases in the rapid application development (RAD) model are:

Business modeling: The information flow is identified between various business functions.

Data modeling: Information gathered from business modeling is used to define data objects that are needed for the business.

Process modeling: Data objects defined in data modeling are converted to achieve the business information flow to achieve some specific business objective. Description are identified and created for CRUD of data objects.

Application generation: Automated tools are used to convert process models into code and the actual system.

Testing and turnover: Test new components and all the interfaces.

Advantages of the RAD model:

- Reduced development time.
- Increases reusability of components
- Quick initial reviews occur
- Encourages customer feedback
- Integration from very beginning solves a lot of integration issues.

Disadvantages of RAD model:

- Depends on strong team and individual performances for identifying business requirements.
- Only system that can be modularized can be built using RAD
- Requires highly skilled developers/designers.
- High dependency on modeling skills
- Inapplicable to cheaper projects as cost of modeling and automated codegeneration is very high.

When to use RAD model:

- RAD should be used when there is a need to create a system that can be modularized in 2-3 months of time.
- It should be used if there's high availability of designers for modeling and the budget is high enough to afford their cost along with the cost of automated code generating tools.
- RAD SDLC model should be chosen only if resources with high business knowledge are available and there is a need to produce the system in a short span of time (2-3 months).

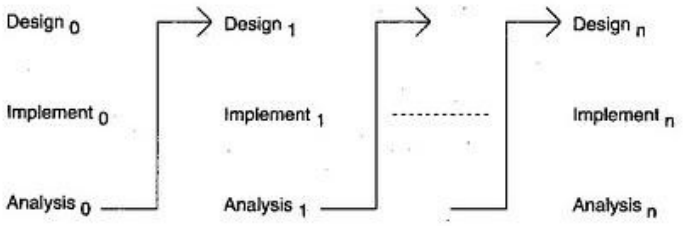
What is Iterative model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

An iterative life cycle model does not attempt to start with a full specification of requirements. Instead, development begins by specifying and implementing just part of the software, which can then be reviewed in order to identify further requirements. This process is then repeated, producing a new version of the software for each cycle of the model.

For example:

In the diagram above when we work **iteratively** we create rough product or product piece in one iteration, then review it and improve it in next iteration and so on until it's finished. As shown in the image above, in the first iteration the whole painting is sketched roughly, then in the second iteration colors are filled and in the third iteration finishing is done. Hence, in iterative model the whole product is developed step by step.

Diagram of Iterative model:



Advantages of Iterative model:

- In iterative model we can only create a high-level design of the application before we actually begin to build the product and define the design solution for the entire product. Later on we can design and built a skeleton version of that, and then evolved the design based on what had been built.
- In iterative model we are building and improving the product step by step. Hence we can track the defects at early stages. This avoids the downward flow of the defects.
- In iterative model we can get the reliable user feedback. When presenting sketches and blueprints of the product to users for their feedback, we are effectively asking them to imagine how the product will work.
- In iterative model less time is spent on documenting and more time is given for designing.

Disadvantages of Iterative model:

- Each phase of an iteration is rigid with no overlaps
- Costly system architecture or design issues may arise because not all requirements are gathered up front for the entire lifecycle

When to use iterative model:

- Requirements of the complete system are clearly defined and understood.
- When the project is big.
- Major requirements must be defined; however, some details can evolve with time.

What is Spiral model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

The spiral model is similar to theincremental model, with more emphasis placed on risk analysis. The spiral model has four phases: Planning, Risk Analysis, Engineering and Evaluation. A software project repeatedly passes through these phases in iterations (called Spirals in this model). The baseline spiral, starting in the planning phase, requirements are gathered and risk is assessed. Each subsequent spirals builds on the baseline spiral.

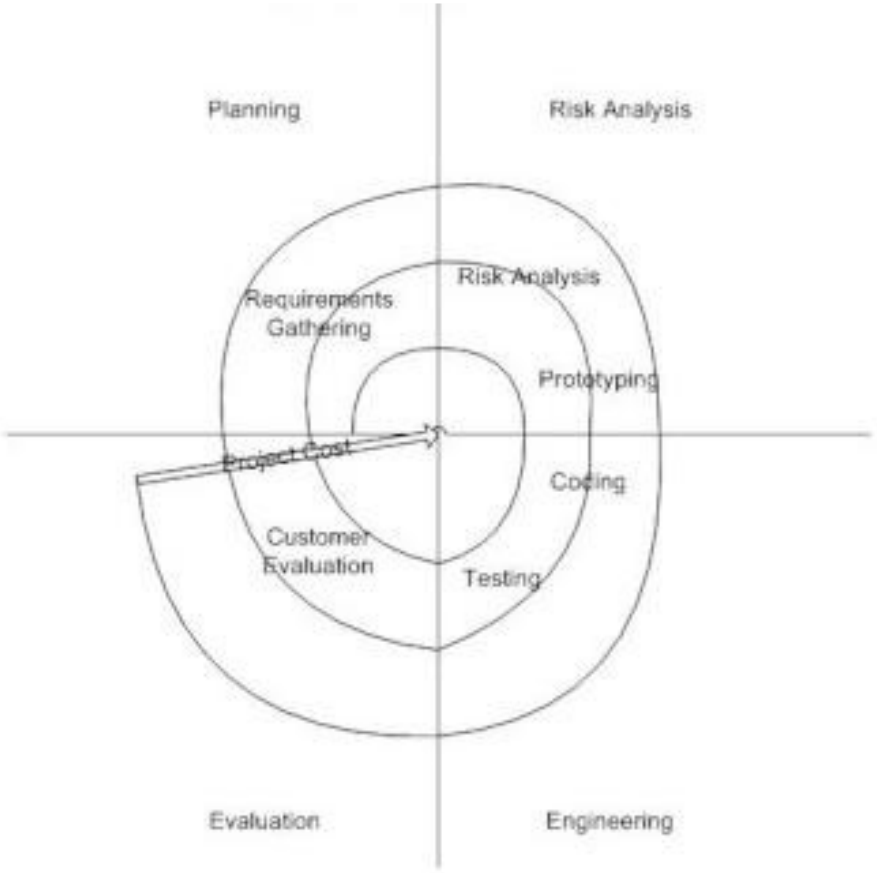
Planning Phase: Requirements are gathered during the planning phase. Requirements like 'BRS' that is 'Bussiness Requirement Specifications' and 'SRS' that is 'System Requirement specifications'.

Risk Analysis: In the **risk analysis phase**, a process is undertaken to identify risk and alternate solutions. A prototype is produced at the end of the risk analysis phase. If any risk is found during the risk analysis then alternate solutions are suggested and implemented.

Engineering Phase: In this phase software is **developed**, along with testing at the end of the phase. Hence in this phase the development and testing is done.

E**valuation phase:** This phase allows the customer to evaluate the output of the project to date before the project continues to the next spiral.

Diagram of Spiral model:



Advantages of Spiral model:

- High amount of risk analysis hence, avoidance of Risk is enhanced.
- Good for large and mission-critical projects.
- Strong approval and documentation control.
- Additional Functionality can be added at a later date.
- Software is produced early in the software life cycle.

Disadvantages of Spiral model:

- Can be a costly model to use.
- Risk analysis requires highly specific expertise.
- Project's success is highly dependent on the risk analysis phase.
- Doesn't work well for smaller projects.

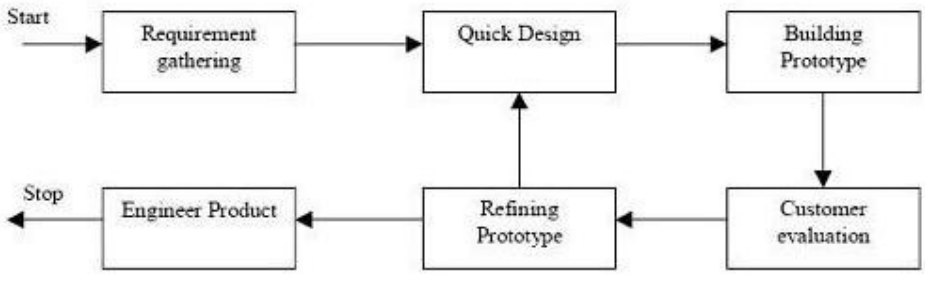
When to use Spiral model:

- When costs and risk evaluation is important
- For medium to high-risk projects
- Long-term project commitment unwise because of potential changes to economic priorities
- Users are unsure of their needs
- Requirements are complex
- New product line
- Significant changes are expected (research and exploration)

What is Prototype model- advantages, disadvantages and when to use it?

The basic idea here is that instead of freezing the requirements before a design or coding can proceed, a throwaway prototype is built to understand the requirements. This prototype is developed based on the currently known requirements. By using this prototype, the client can get an “actual feel” of the system, since the interactions with prototype can enable the client to better understand the requirements of the desired system. Prototyping is an attractive idea for complicated and large systems for which there is no manual process or existing system to help determining the requirements. The prototype are usually not complete systems and many of the details are not built in the prototype. The goal is to provide a system with overall functionality.

Diagram of Prototype model:



Prototyping Model

Advantages of Prototype model:

- Users are actively involved in the development
- Since in this methodology a working model of the system is provided, the users get a better understanding of the system being developed.
- Errors can be detected much earlier.
- Quicker user feedback is available leading to better solutions.
- Missing functionality can be identified easily
- Confusing or difficult functions can be identified Requirements validation, Quick implementation of, incomplete, but functional, application.

Disadvantages of Prototype model:

- Leads to implementing and then repairing way of building systems.
- Practically, this methodology may increase the complexity of the system as scope of the system may expand beyond original plans.
- Incomplete application may cause application not to be used as the full system was designed Incomplete or inadequate problem analysis.

When to use Prototype model:

- Prototype model should be used when the desired system needs to have a lot of interaction with the end users.
- Typically, online systems, web interfaces have a very high amount of interaction with end users, are best suited for Prototype model. It might take a while for a system to be built that allows ease of use and needs minimal training for the end user.
- Prototyping ensures that the end users constantly work with the system and provide a feedback which is incorporated in the prototype to result in a useable system. They are excellent for designing good human computer interface systems.