

How to Create User Stories

Agile Guide

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“The customer is always right.” Though this motto is often contested in the retail world, it’s not a bad one to keep in mind for Agile projects. In fact, customer satisfaction is listed as the highest priority in the [Agile Manifesto](#).

In Agile methodology, it is common practice to include user feedback in the development process. Agile teams welcome this external perspective to ensure they are on the right track and that the final deliverable will suit the customer’s needs.

When breaking projects down into an [Agile work structure](#), teams will start by exploring the customer perspective. This is usually done by creating user stories.

In this article, we will talk all about user stories - what they are, how to write one, the benefits, and the disadvantages. We’ll also share an [Agile project plan template](#) to help you manage your Agile projects from end to end.

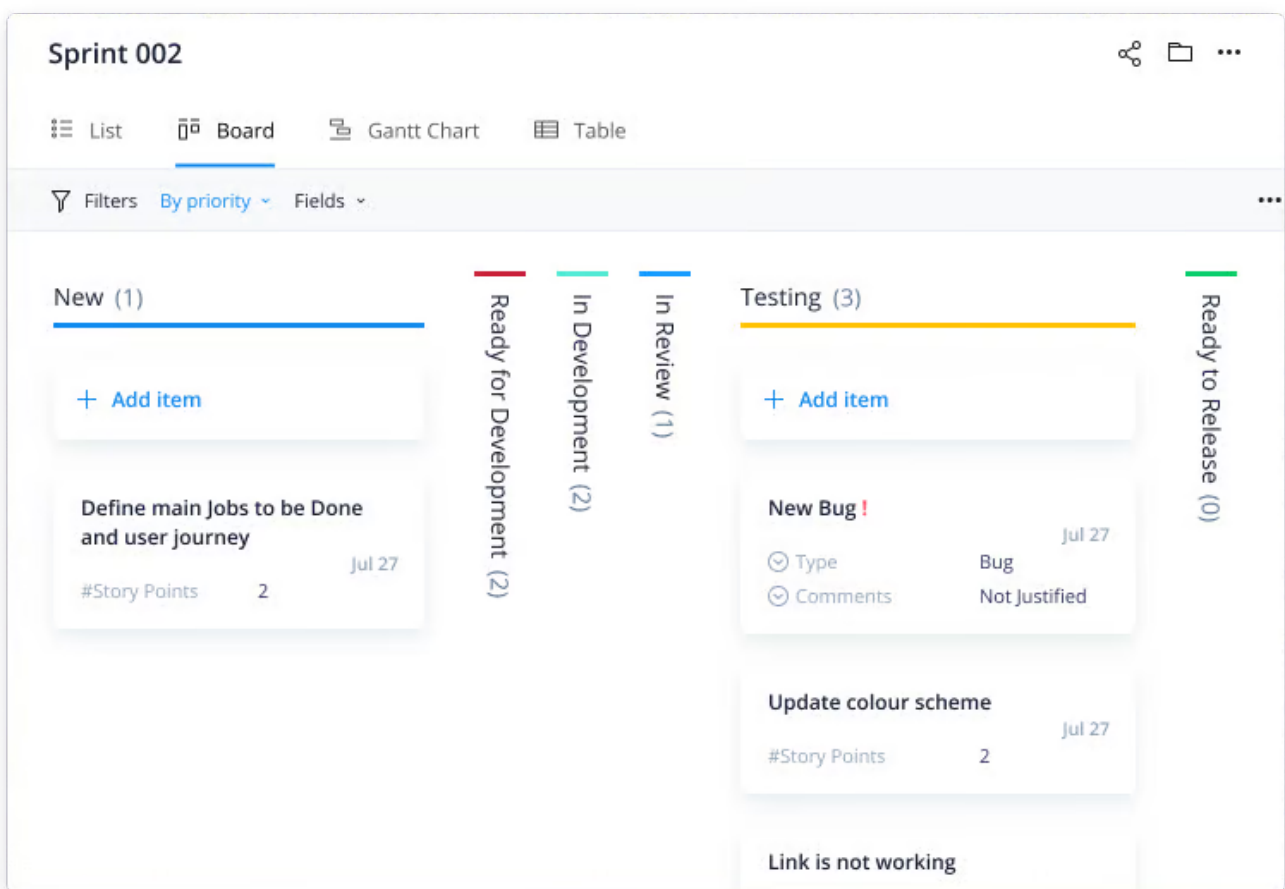
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What is a user story?

A user story is a small unit of work in an [Agile workflow](#). It is a short, written explanation of a particular user's need and how it can be fulfilled. There is no room for jargon in a user story. It is written in easily accessible language to provide a clear picture of what the user requires. The technical details can be discussed at a later stage.

Every user story involves a short-form request that is completed in one [Agile iteration](#) or [sprint](#), which normally lasts about one or two weeks. Teams measure the complexity of their user stories with [story points](#), helping them to accurately estimate how long a particular request will take.



A collection of Agile user stories is referred to as an [epic](#). A product owner will be responsible for managing the epic, but they can be written by any Agile team member.

A user story is similar to a use case but is not as detailed. The former is a very brief description of a planned action item, while the latter will likely contain extra sections such as required conditions, various paths a user might take in using a product, and workflow diagrams.

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User story examples

In the Agile framework, user stories follow a simple template. The chosen user story format will outline the “who,” “what,” and “why” of a particular requirement.

- **Who** wants something?
- **What** do they want?
- **Why** do they want it?

The following template is one of the most common:

“As [persona], I want to [action], so that I can [benefit].”

For each story, the writer will include a user persona, the action they wish to take or the ability they wish to have, and the benefit they hope to achieve as a result. Here are some examples:

Example 1: An online gamer

“As an online gamer, I want to have a multiplayer option so that I can play online with friends.”

Example 2: A design team lead

“As a design team lead, I want to organize assets, so I can keep track of multiple creative projects.”

Example 3: An e-commerce shopper

“As an e-commerce shopper, I want to filter my searches so I can find products quickly.”

Now that you know what a user story looks like, you can get to work creating one.

Five steps for writing user stories

Want some practical advice on how to write user stories? Use these five steps as a guide:

Step 1: Outline acceptance criteria

The [definition of done](#) is the set of criteria that needs to be fulfilled for your user story to be considered complete. Define the specific acceptance criteria and use it as a checklist.

Step 2: Decide on user personas

Conduct extensive user research by creating surveys, hosting focus groups, and reading user forums. Analyze your data and search for patterns to identify your key [personas](#).

Step 3: Create tasks

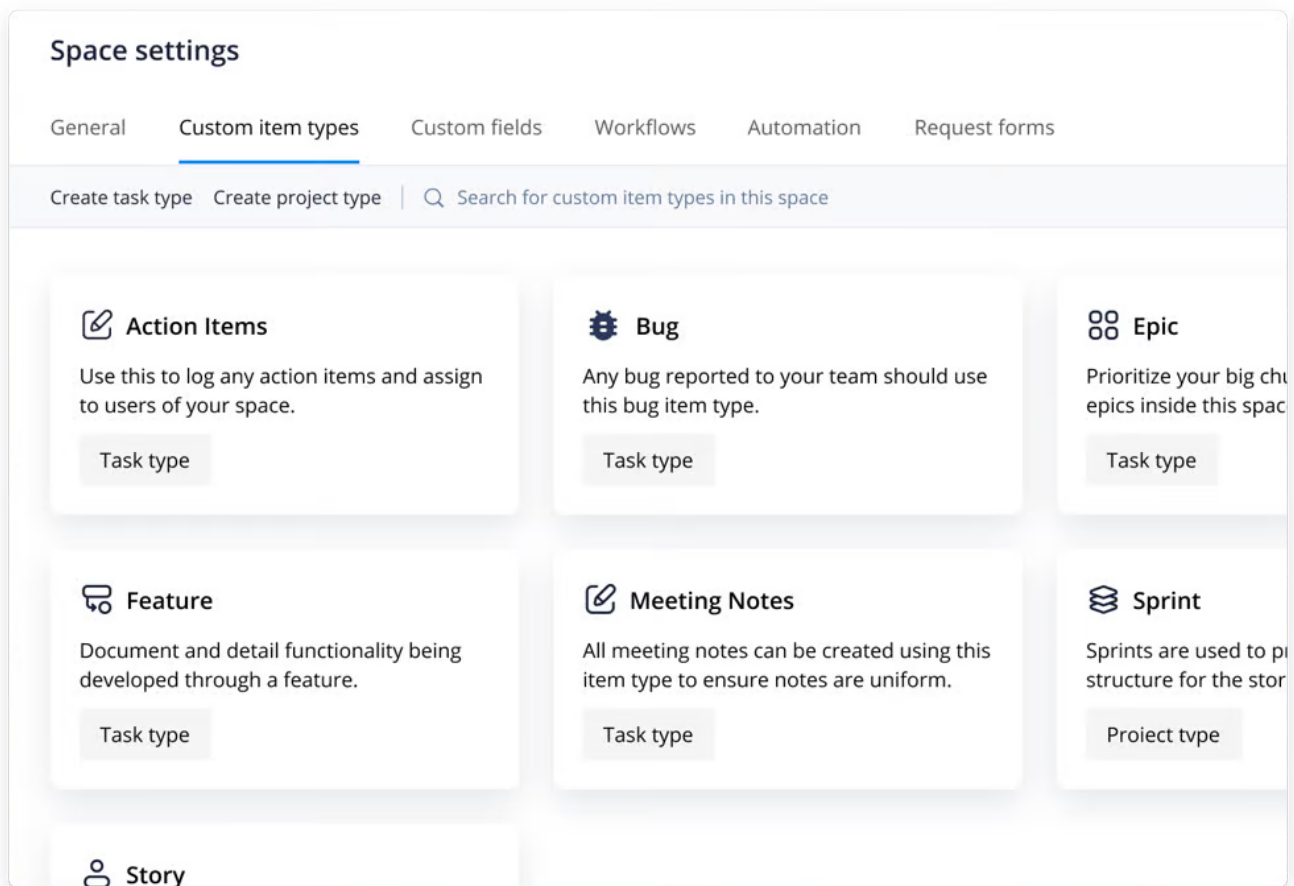
Break your story down into numerous [tasks](#) to make it more manageable. If it is a complex requirement, you can also add subtasks. Include detailed descriptions, so your team is aligned on what each task requires.

Step 4: Map stories

Use [user story mapping](#) to structure work in a large process. In this case, your stories will take the form of ordered steps.

Step 5: Request feedback

Speak to users and potential customers to find out what they want. Ask them for their opinions on existing products or if they have suggestions for new features. Incorporate this feedback into your user story.



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What makes a good user story?

So, you've written your user story. But how do you know if it's any good?

Agile teams assess the quality of stories by using the [INVEST acronym](#). This stands for:

- **I**ndependent: The user story should be independent of all others. Because they are not connected, they can be worked on in any order.
- **N**egotiable: A user story should be flexible enough to allow for negotiation between the customer and product owner.
- **V**aluable: What value does the user story bring? If you cannot find any value, the story should not be completed.
- **E**stimable: You should be able to estimate how long a user story will take so that you can effectively manage your time.

- **Small:** The story must be small enough to be completed within a single sprint.
- **Testable:** You must be able to test your user story in line with quality assurance standards.

If a user story does not meet the INVEST criteria, it should be rewritten or removed from the epic. However, if it does, your team members can get to work. Schedule daily [Agile meetings](#) to check on their progress and ensure they are on track to complete the user story within the [sprint timeframe](#).

Benefits of user stories

Why write user stories in the first place? Because they offer numerous benefits for an Agile project. Here are a few examples:

- **Simplified format:** User stories are written in easy-to-understand language. This eliminates confusion and makes it easier to grasp what the customer is looking for.
- **Increased flexibility:** Because user stories don't go into technical detail, they can be molded to fit changing situations.
- **Improved collaboration:** When team members are aligned on one goal, they can work better together and collaborate easily with other [project stakeholders](#).

Though the benefits of writing user stories are significant, a product manager must also consider the potential disadvantages.

Disadvantages of user stories

Here are a few user story pitfalls to watch out for:

- **Incomplete stories:** Though the language is intended to be informal, sometimes user stories are far too vague and exclude necessary details.
- **Insufficient time:** Writing a good story takes time. It requires extensive research and regular communication with stakeholders, a fact that is sometimes overlooked.
- **Narrow vision:** Because user stories focus on one single requirement, they can be hard to scale, and teams can sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture (in this case, an epic).

Before you start your story, take some time to identify potential risks or disadvantages and outline how you aim to counteract them.

Take your user stories to the next level with Wrike

After creating user stories, it's time to work on the breakdown of your project. Wrike has the perfect solution for that.

With Wrike's software, teams can easily implement Agile methodologies using custom workflows, Kanban boards, and pre-built templates. These features enable teams to kick-start projects quickly, visualize and progress, track time, manage tasks, and collaborate effectively. Agile development teams can also use Wrike to prioritize product backlogs, manage sprints, and run retrospectives.

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