

The five stages of a project, and what a project manager does in each

Almost every project, IT or not, moves through the same five stages. Learn these first: **the jargon makes much more sense once you know where it fits**. Each stage below shows the question it answers, the work involved, and the template from this kit to use.

01	Initiation Agree why the project exists <i>"Why are we doing this, and who is it for?"</i> Meet the sponsor, write down the problem and the goal, name the stakeholders (the people who care about the result), and agree what is in and out of scope. Nothing gets built until this is signed.	USE Project Charter One document with purpose, objectives, scope, milestones and sign-off.
02	Planning Decide how it will get done <i>"What exactly, by when, for how much, and who does what?"</i> Break the work into pieces, estimate it, build the schedule and budget, and list the risks before they happen. In Agile teams, this is also where the backlog is shaped and the first sprints are planned.	USE Risk Register List and score risks early. Sprint Planning Capacity, backlog, burndown.
03	Execution The team does the work <i>"What is blocking us today?"</i> The team builds; the project manager keeps it moving. Most of the day is conversations: daily stand-ups, clearing blockers, making decisions quickly, and keeping everyone looking at the same facts.	USE Sprint Planning Update story status and the burndown each day.
04	Monitoring Check progress against the plan <i>"Are we on track, and if not, what do we change?"</i> This runs alongside execution, not after it. Compare progress, cost and risks with the plan every week, handle change requests properly, and tell stakeholders the truth early, especially when it is bad news.	USE RAID Log Risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies, reviewed in every status meeting.
05	Closure Finish properly <i>"Did we deliver what we promised, and what did we learn?"</i> Get formal acceptance, hand the product over to the team that will run it, release people and suppliers, and hold a lessons-learned session. Projects that just fade out repeat the same mistakes next time.	CHECK Re-read your Charter: were the objectives and success criteria met?

Your first week with this kit

- 1 Draft the **Project Charter** with your sponsor in one 60-minute session.
- 2 Run a 30-minute risk workshop with the team and fill the **Risk Register**.
- 3 Open the **RAID Log** and add every assumption you heard this week.
- 4 If you work in sprints, set up **Sprint Planning** with real team availability.
- 5 Book a weekly 30-minute review of the RAID Log. Keep it on the calendar.

Words you will hear

Stakeholder	Anyone who cares about or can affect the result.
Scope	What the project will and will not deliver.
Risk / issue	A risk might happen. An issue already has.
Sprint	A short, fixed period (often 2 weeks) of focused work.
Velocity	How much work a team usually finishes per sprint.
UAT	User acceptance testing: real users confirm it works.

Remember: most of a project manager's day is not charts. It is conversations. The templates simply make sure those conversations are about the same facts.