



# Packages

*More is less and easier*

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## Problem

It often happens that we need to insert [a list of tasks](#) in a planning, and:

- they must be grouped in one summary,
- we don't know the sequence of execution,
- or there is no preferred sequence,
- and we want to track the individual tasks

As we go along, we hesitate to insert this - eventually long - list of tasks, because we fear that it will overload the planning and it's updating.

There is very a simple solution to this problem.

## Solution

**Arrange a list of tasks in a package.**

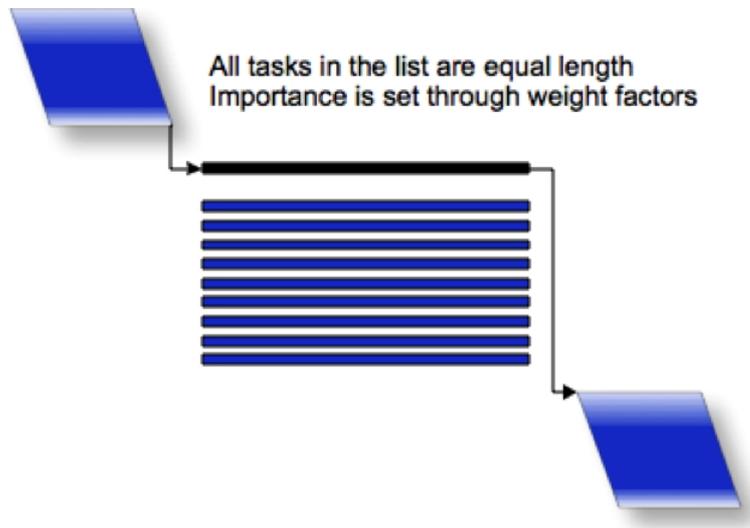
- A package is a [summary](#) grouping the tasks.
- The package is given a [window of time](#) for execution.
- All tasks must be completed at the [end](#) of this time window.
- We [don't care about the sequence](#).
- We track the package on the [task level](#).
- We [link the package](#) to it's predecessor(s) and successor(s)

## Method 1

### Tasks have equal length and weight factors.

In this case we create a summary containing a series of tasks of **equal length** (duration). This package in its whole is linked to predecessors and successors, by linking the summary task. We can assign **weight factors** to the individual tasks (Weight Factors are explained in another article), so that their respective weighted contribution to the overall progress will be taken into account.

The tasks will be **progressed individually**. We will monitor the progress of the package. We don't care about the sequence into which the tasks are executed.



## Method 2

### Tasks have unequal length

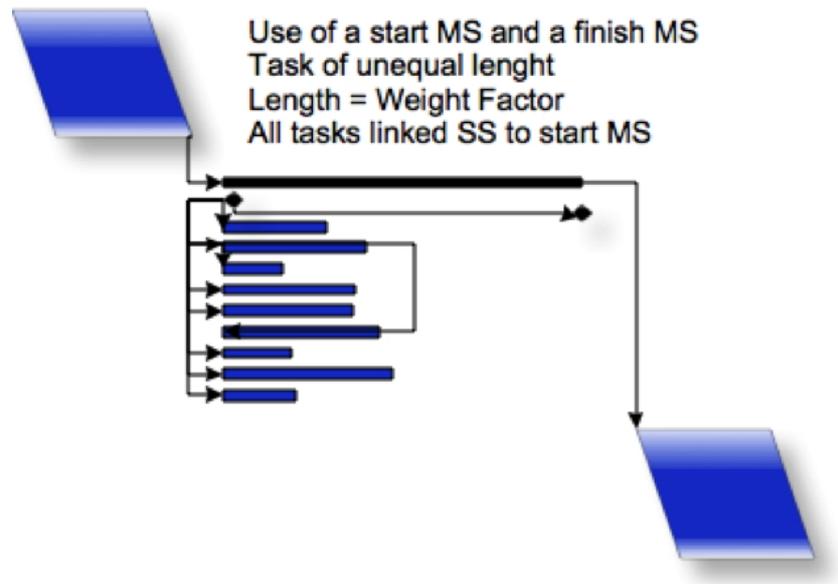
In this case we create a summary containing a series of tasks of **unequal length** (duration).

We **add a start milestone and a finish milestone** separated by a distance equal to the duration allocated to the package. All tasks are linked in SS to the start milestone. This package in it's whole is linked to predecessors and successors, by linking the summary task.

We need not assign weight factors to these tasks as their individual durations will be taken as weight factor.

The tasks will be **progressed individually**. We will monitor the progress of the package.

We don't care about the sequence into which the tasks are executed.



## Preferred method

In our experience method 1 is the preferred method, because

- Easiest
- Fastest
- Produces no perturbed S-curve images

## More on the absence of a sequence

One can wonder, “why is there no sequence ?”.

The answer is: “Because it’s **not relevant**”. (in the case of a package)

Consider this:

- Contractor (external or internal) has to execute a set of related tasks that together form a package.
- He must respect a given window of time.
- Say the set of task are numbered {1,2,3...,N}
- He may start with task 6, then jump to task 3, then to 9, then come back to 6, then jump again to j, to k, to whatever.
- There is no pre-defined or even pre-definable sequence.
- It is his productivity that is at stake, he knows best how to proceed, we don’t
- But still, we track the progress of the package by tracking the progress of the individual tasks.

## Examples

Here are a some cases where the use of packages can be considered:

- Issuing a **document package**: related set of drawings, related set of diagrams, bills of material, etc.
- The installation of a set similar and related items: a **series of pumps**, a **set of iso's** (in piping), a set of office equipments, etc.
- Everytime we consider a set of related, similar tasks, the sequence of which is not relevant for the planning, but whereby the monitoring of the progress of the whole set is relevant.

## Remember

- *Package → set of related, similar tasks*
- *Sequence not relevant*
- *Tracking the progress of the individual task is requested.*
- *We link packages “in globo” to predecessors and successors*

## Final remark

I noticed that packages can be used **more often** than one would originally think. This techniques **simplifies** the planning construction and **speeds it up** considerably. Hence: **More** (tasks in the planning), still **less** work and **easier** done.

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or simply post a comment on my blog [www.jptollenboom.org](http://www.jptollenboom.org)