A SHORT GUIDE TO PLANNING AND WORKING IN TIMEBOXES

Timeboxes on one page

A timebox is the fixed stretch of time a team plans and works in (Scrum calls it a sprint). The team agrees a goal and the work needed to reach it. The end date is fixed: when time runs short, the scope is reduced. Each timebox should end with finished work the team can show, progress it can see, and something learned about how it works.

WHY WORK THIS WAY

To surface

The goal, scope, risks, dependencies and deadlines are visible to the whole team, so everyone knows why this timebox exists.

To prioritise

A fixed stretch of time makes the team choose what matters most and put its effort there.

To act

Checking the work as you go shows what needs to change, and the team adapts its plan, its process and its priorities in response.

A FEEDBACK LOOP

A timebox is a plan-do-check-act cycle with smaller cycles inside it. The sooner a team closes one, the sooner it learns.

MEETING	WHAT IT IS FOR	WHO	FOUR-WEEK TIMEBOX	TWO-WEEK TIMEBOX
Planning Scrum: sprint planning	Agree the goal; choose and order the work that fulfils it; put it on a shared board	Whole team	60 min max, day 1	60 min max, day 1
Alignment Scrum: daily scrum	Are we heading towards the goal or drifting? Correct course and adapt the plan	Whole team; leader optional	15 to 30 min, once a week	15 min, most days
Refinement	Build the shared understanding the team needs before the next pieces of work can start	Whoever the work needs, invited by the team member who raises it	45 min, once a week	Short, as often as needed
Review	Show what was done against the goal; gather stakeholders' feedback	Whole team and stakeholders	60 min max, last week	60 min max, last day
Retrospective	Plan improvements to how you work together, to act on in the next cycle	Whole team	60 min max, last week	60 min max, last day

These times are suggestions: try them, then settle on what suits your team and your work. IT, sales and marketing teams often choose two weeks; legal, people and leadership teams often find four weeks works better. Each meeting works only as well as the team's agreement about it and the preparation people bring to it.

HOW TO START

1. Talk it through with your team before you begin: the pros and cons, their concerns and their ideas.
2. Agree your timebox length and rhythm together. It is the team's timebox.
3. Repurpose the meetings you already hold: make them focused, shorter and more frequent.
4. Keep the plan where everyone can see it, on a wall or on a shared board such as Microsoft Teams Planner.

MORE, FREE

Facilitating timebox planning
kubairshirazee.com/agile-sprint-planning-guide

Facilitating timebox reviews
kubairshirazee.com/timebox-review

Microsoft Teams Planner how-to
kubairshirazee.com/microsoft-teams-planner-how-to

© 2026 Kubair Shirazee. Licensed CC BY-SA 4.0: use it, adapt it, credit Kubair Shirazee and share your version on the same terms.