



Making a Project Plan

Breaking big goals into small steps!



EXPLORE



DISCUSS



PLAN



CREATE



APPLY



Our Project Timeline



Plan Tasks



Set Dates



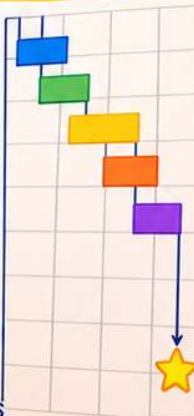
Assign Work



Check Progress



Reach Milestones



My Project Plan

Task	Who?	Start	End	✓
1. Plan				☐
2. Design				☐
3. Build				☐
4. Test				☐
5. Present				☐



Grade Range

K - 5



Estimated Time

35 - 50 minutes



Key Concept

Tasks, Timeline, Milestones
Sequencing and Planning



STEM Connection

Engineering Design
Systems Thinking

Teacher Overview

Once a team understands its project, the next step is deciding how the work will get done. A project plan breaks a larger goal into manageable tasks, puts those tasks in a useful order, identifies who will help, and establishes important checkpoints. This lesson introduces students to work breakdown, sequencing, dependencies, schedules, and milestones in an age-appropriate way.

Learning Objectives

- Break a project goal into smaller, manageable tasks.
- Arrange tasks in a logical sequence.
- Recognize simple dependencies between tasks.
- Identify who will be responsible for work and when it should happen.
- Explain how milestones help a team recognize important progress.

Penny's PM Concept

Penny says: “Big projects can feel much easier when we break them into smaller steps. A project plan helps our team see what needs to happen, what comes next, and how all the pieces fit together.”

Key Vocabulary

Word	Kid-Friendly Meaning
Task	A specific piece of work that needs to be completed.
Sequence	The order in which tasks happen.
Dependency	When one task depends on another task happening first.
Schedule	A plan showing when work should happen.
Milestone	An important point that shows meaningful project progress.
Resource	A person, material, tool, or information needed to complete work.

Lesson Plan: Making a Project Plan

1. Start With the Goal - 5 minutes	Choose a simple goal such as creating a class poster display. Ask students what work must happen before the finished display can exist. Capture every task they suggest.
2. Break It Down - 8 minutes	Show how a large piece of work can be divided into smaller tasks. For the display, tasks might include choosing a topic, gathering information, creating artwork, writing captions, assembling the display, checking it, and presenting it.
3. What Comes First? - 7 minutes	Place sample tasks on cards or sticky notes and ask students to arrange them. Introduce dependencies: some work cannot begin until another task is finished.
4. Build the Project Plan - 15 minutes	Teams complete the My Project Plan worksheet. They list tasks, put them in order, identify who will help, choose approximate start and finish points, and mark at least one milestone.
5. Plan Review - 5 minutes	Teams review the plan from beginning to end. Ask: Is anything missing? Is the order logical? Does everyone know what they are responsible for? Revise before beginning the work.

Discussion Questions

- Why is a big goal easier to manage when we break it into smaller tasks?
- Can every project task happen at the same time? Why or why not?
- What happens to the plan if an earlier task takes longer than expected?
- How can milestones help a team stay motivated and understand its progress?

Student Worksheet: My Project Plan

Project Name: _____

Our Goal: _____

#	TASK	WHO?	START	FINISH	DONE
1					☐
2					☐
3					☐
4					☐
5					☐
6					☐

DEPENDENCY CHECK

Which task must happen before another task can begin?

Task _____ must happen before Task _____ because

OUR MILESTONE

An important point we want to celebrate or check is:

Plan Review: Are We Ready?

Before beginning the work, walk through the project plan as a team. A useful plan should make the path from the goal to the finished result easier to understand.

PROJECT PLAN CHECK

- We broke our goal into smaller tasks.
- Our tasks are in a logical order.
- We identified tasks that depend on other work.
- Each task has someone who knows they are helping with it.
- We have an idea of when the work should happen.
- We identified at least one important milestone.
- Everyone understands what happens next.

What Could Change?

Plans are useful guides, but projects do not always happen exactly as expected. Ask students to choose one task and imagine that it takes longer, needs different materials, or cannot begin yet. What parts of the plan might need to change?

Our possible change: _____

What would we adjust? _____

Reflection & Quick Assessment

Duke's Planning Challenge:

Before starting the work, ask: **What are our tasks? What order should they happen in? Who is helping? What depends on something else? What milestone tells us we're making progress?**

Exit Ticket

Why do project managers break large goals into smaller tasks?

What does it mean when one task depends on another?

What is a project milestone?

Circle one: I can help create a project plan: YES / ALMOST / NOT YET

Teacher Check for Understanding

- Student can break a project goal into smaller tasks.
- Student can arrange tasks in a reasonable sequence.
- Student can recognize a simple dependency.
- Student understands the purpose of a milestone.
- Student recognizes that plans can be updated when circumstances change.

Extension Activities

STEM Extension: Give teams a design challenge and require a project plan before materials are distributed. After the build, compare the original plan with what actually happened and discuss why changes were needed.

Home Connection: Students choose a home project such as preparing a meal, organizing a room, or planting a garden. They list the tasks in order and identify one dependency.

Teacher Tip: Focus on useful planning rather than perfect dates. Younger students can use sequence words such as first, next, then, and last. Older students can add dates, durations, dependencies, and owners.

Next Resource: Breaking Down the Work - introducing the Work Breakdown Structure and helping students organize a larger project into deliverables and smaller pieces of work.