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THE PROS AND CONS OF PLANNING POKER

A CRITICAL LOOK AT AGILE ESTIMATION.



How Planning Poker Works? (1/2)

1

The Product Owner presents a User Story or task to be estimated.

2

Team members discuss the task to ensure a shared understanding.

3

Each team member privately selects a card with their estimated effort or size.

4

Cards typically use the Fibonacci sequence to reflect task complexity.

5

All team members reveal their selected cards simultaneously.



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How Planning Poker Works? (2/2)

6

Team members with the highest and lowest estimates explain their reasoning.

7

The team discusses differences in estimates to clarify misunderstandings or assumptions.

8

The team may re-vote until consensus is reached.

9

The agreed-upon estimate is recorded and used for planning the sprint or project phase.



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Pros of Planning Poker (1/2)

Encourages Team Collaboration

Every team member contributes their opinion, leading to a shared understanding and stronger team cohesion.

Promotes Equal Participation

Prevents dominant personalities from swaying decisions, as everyone reveals their estimate simultaneously.

Helps Identify Assumptions & Risks

Differences in estimates often highlight misunderstandings or risks, which can be addressed early on.



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Pros of Planning Poker (2/2)

Encourages Focused Discussions

The need to explain estimates keeps discussions relevant and on-topic, avoiding unnecessary digressions.

Builds Shared Understanding

The process ensures that everyone on the team understands the scope and requirements of each task.

Easy to Use and Implement

Requires minimal setup, whether using physical cards or digital tools, making it accessible for any team.



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Cons of Planning Poker (1/2)

May Lead to Groupthink

The desire for consensus might push team members to conform to the majority, potentially overlooking valid concerns or ideas.

Estimation Might Still Be Inaccurate

Despite the process, estimates can still be off, particularly for very complex or unfamiliar tasks.

Can Be Stressful for Team Members

The pressure to provide an estimate, especially in a group setting, can be stressful for some team members, leading to less accurate contributions.



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Cons of Planning Poker (2/2)

May Not Address All Uncertainties

Some risks or unknowns might only become apparent during the actual work, no matter how thorough the estimation process.

Not Suitable for Large Teams

With more participants, it becomes challenging to manage discussions and reach a consensus in a reasonable timeframe.

Requires a Skilled Facilitator

Without a good facilitator, discussions can become unfocused or dominated by a few voices, reducing the effectiveness of the process.



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How to Decide Whether to Adopt Planning Poker

- Culture
- Team Dynamics
- Team Size
- Project Complexity
- Task Definition
- Consensus Building
- Time Available
- Facilitation Skills

Note: Remember, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Consider all relevant factors, including those listed above, before deciding whether Planning Poker is the right fit for your team.



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