How to run Sprint Planning: from Sprint Goal to a plan the team believes

20 November 2026 · 6 min read · blogs.iictp.org/how-to-run-sprint-planning

Sprint Planning starts the Sprint. In the 2020 Scrum Guide it answers three questions: why is this Sprint valuable, what can be done, and how will the chosen work get done. The output is a Sprint Goal and a Sprint Backlog. A good session takes far less than its maximum timebox of eight hours for a one-month Sprint.

TL;DR The short version

- Sprint Planning answers why the Sprint is valuable, what can be done and how, producing a Sprint Goal and a Sprint Backlog.
- Arrive with a refined, ordered backlog and a realistic view of capacity.
- Write a goal, not a list of tickets, and do not plan to 100% of capacity.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/how-to-run-sprint-planning

Before the meeting

- The Product Owner brings an ordered backlog with the top items refined: clear, small and with acceptance criteria.
- The team knows its capacity: holidays, on-call, other commitments.
- Last Sprint's unfinished work has been looked at, not silently carried over.

A simple agenda

1. **Why (Sprint Goal):** the Product Owner proposes how the Sprint could increase value; the whole team agrees a goal.
2. **What:** the Developers select items from the backlog that serve the goal and fit their capacity.
3. **How:** the Developers break items into work for the first days, often tasks of a day or less.
4. **Check:** does everyone believe the plan? If not, adjust scope now, not on day eight.

Good and weak Sprint Goals

- Weak: "Complete tickets 101 to 115." It is a list, not a goal.
- Better: "Customers can pay by bank transfer in the test environment."
- Better: "Cut search response time so the slowest pages load in under one second."
- A good goal lets the team drop or swap items and still succeed.

Common mistakes

- Planning to 100% of capacity, leaving no room for the unexpected.
- Bringing unrefined items and refining them in planning.
- The Product Owner or a manager assigning tasks to people.
- No Sprint Goal, so the Sprint becomes a to-do list.
- Forgetting non-feature work: technical debt, upgrades and on-call.

Estimating capacity

Teams often use past throughput or story points to sense-check how much fits. Treat these as a guide for the team, not a target. See velocity and burndown charts.

> Related credential: Agile Delivery Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. Schwaber, K. and Sutherland, J. (2020). The Scrum Guide. scrumguides.org.
2. IICTP. TPBOK, Engineering Governance & Agile Delivery. iictp.org/standards/tpbok.

Published by IICTP, an independent technical credential body, on 20 November 2026. The current version of this post is at https://blogs.iictp.org/how-to-run-sprint-planning. More guides: blogs.iictp.org.