

Check how well you manage risk

There are four key Agile tools for managing risk on software development projects. These tools help ensure you deliver the customer value and quality you need, within the time and budget you have.

The tools are:

- prioritising effectively
- increasing transparency
- limiting work in progress
- reducing batch size.

How to use the Agile risk management checklists

By answering nine questions about each of these tools, you can assess how well you are managing project risk.

Once you're done, go back and check each question you answered 'no' to. Introducing any of these practices will help you better manage risk on your projects. Which do you think would be easiest to introduce? Start with that one, then move onto the next.

[Learn more about managing project risk with Agile](#)

Prioritisation evaluation

Fill in the table below to see how your project or organisation is doing with prioritisation.

Practice	Yes/No
All features are prioritised	
Features are prioritised based on business value	
We have a shared understanding of what business value means for each of our projects	
The features still to be worked on are re-prioritised regularly (at least monthly)	
We can introduce new work into the backlog at any time	
Prioritisation is collaborative and transparent	
Everyone who should be involved in prioritisation is	
A prioritised backlog is visible to the team at all times	
When new information (technological, process or market) becomes available work is re-prioritised as necessary	

Add up one point for every question to which you answered 'yes'.

- 0–2 points:** Adopting a more rigorous approach to prioritisation will have a dramatic effect on the value delivered in your projects or ... concentrate on your golf.
- 3–6 points:** You are already doing a great deal to ensure prioritisation is happening and is valuable. There are probably one or two practices that will sharpen your prioritisation.
- 7–9 points:** You are getting the most from prioritisation already - nice work!

[Learn more about prioritising effectively to manage risk](#)

Transparency evaluation

Fill in the table below to see how your project or organisation is doing with transparency.

Practice	Yes/No
All team members know why they are working on the project	
All team members have an explicit and shared understanding of 'quality'	
The output of my teams is frequently and regularly inspected	
The processes we use are frequently and regularly inspected	
The work of the team is visible to the team	
The work of the team is visible to the organisation	
Individuals are empowered to raise issues and red flags	
All team members have an explicit and shared understanding of when work is complete	

Add up one point for every question to which you answered 'yes'.

0–2 points: There is little transparency in your teams.

3–6 points: While there is some visibility of the work and processes, there are a number of opportunities for improvement.

7–9 points: You're transparent (like a jellyfish!) - nice work.

[Learn more about increasing transparency to manage risk](#)

Work in progress evaluation

Fill in the table below to see how your project or organisation is handling WIP.

Practice	Yes/No
Teams have formal WIP limits in place	
My organisation limits WIP across the organisation	
My team measures and monitors the cycle time of work increments	
My organisation measures and monitors the cycle time of increments of value	
Teams pull work as capacity becomes available	
Teams visualise their WIP	
WIP limits are adjusted to reduce cycle time, as needed	
Teams focus on fully completing increments of work	
Teams integrate early and often	

Add up one point for every question to which you answered ‘yes’.

- 0–2 points:** WIP is not being limited, made visible or measured, or you are not measuring the impact of limiting WIP. There are a number of small but effective measures you can take to begin harnessing the power of limiting WIP.
- 3–6 points:** You are limiting, making visible and/or measuring WIP. You may already be seeing the benefits of reducing WIP, but you may not be measuring the impact or applying WIP limits as broadly as you could.
- 7–9 points:** You have limited WIP in place and are likely to be seeing the benefits! Are there any more opportunities for you to limit or make visible WIP?

[Learn more about limiting Work in Progress to manage risk](#)

Batch size evaluation

Fill in the table below to see how your project or organisation is doing with batch size.

Practice	Yes/No
Batch size is monitored at all stages (e.g. funding, planning, discovery, prototyping, defining requirements, development, testing, integration, deployment)	
Batch size is controlled at all stages	
Teams break work down into the smallest sensible batch sizes	
Teams deliver work in increments of potentially shippable software	
Teams complete work in vertical slices	
Test Driven Development is employed	
Teams integrate early and often	
Teams deploy frequently	
Communication is in small batches, ideally face-to-face and in good time	

Add up one point for every question to which you answered ‘yes’.

0–2 points: Batch size is not being reduced or measured. There are a number of small but effective practices you can implement to start getting the benefits of reducing batch size.

3–6 points: You are reducing and/or measuring batch size. You may already be seeing the benefits of reducing the size of the batches you work in, but you have the opportunity to make further improvements.

7–9 points: You have reduced your batch sizes and are likely to be seeing the benefits! Can you take it to the next level?

[Learn more about reducing batch size to manage risk](#)

Next steps

Combine your scores for the Prioritisation, Transparency, Work in Progress and Batch Size checklists.

- 0–8 points:** The good news is that you have plenty of room for improvement. This means that each step you take can make a big difference. Start today and you can be seeing the benefits tomorrow.
- 9–24 points:** You're already using many of the Agile risk management techniques, which shows you're on the right track. But don't stop now. Keep introducing new practices until the Agile mindset that underlies them becomes second nature.
- 25–36 points:** Your Agile risk management rocks. Now you've inspected your practice, you'll have identified any areas you can adapt and improve. You know what you need to do!