

# Definition of Ready (DoR)

An agreed upon set of criteria to ensure a story is sprint ready

SIMPLIFIED, ONE-PAGE SUMMARY (SOS)



## WHAT is a Definition of Ready?

The **Definition of Ready (DoR)** is part of a working agreement that specifies the conditions that must be met before a Story can be accepted into an Iteration or Sprint. "Story" is used throughout this SOS, but applies to any Product Backlog Item (PBI).

## WHY use a Definition of Ready?

- Prior to starting work, reduce the amount of re-work and execution risk taken on by the team by having a clear, comprehensive understanding of what it means to be "done"
- The team's able to "hit the ground running" and stop avoiding work they don't understand
- An agreed upon set of criteria ensures that those criteria have the best possible chance of being completed in the sprint
- Explicit agreements create psychological safety for team members to speak up when they're not being set up for success

## WHERE TO BEGIN?

Try the I.N.V.E.S.T. criteria to kick-start the conversation & work toward a candidate DoR

- INDEPENDENT** Work item is modular and can be delivered with no (or manageable) dependencies
- NEGOTIABLE** A basic solution is articulated with room for options
- VALUABLE** The value is clearly identified in the "...so that..." statement
- ESTIMABLE** Provides just enough information to be able to size the story relative to other work
- SMALL** Small enough to be completed in one iteration (e.g. one sprint)
- TESTABLE** The acceptance criteria have been developed and are understood by the team

## COMMON "MUST HAVE" CRITERIA

While everything needs to be discussed and agreed upon as a team, it's usually a good idea for the following items to be factored into your DoR

**TITLE**  
A few words that clearly summarize the desired outcome

**DESCRIPTION**  
The story isn't ready until a clear description is provided

**ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA**  
If the team agrees to use acceptance criteria, there needs to be at least an initial pass before work begins

**ESTIMATE**  
Helps to know when the team has reached their capacity for the iteration

**PRIORITIZED?**  
Has the work been evaluated against other items in the sprint and deemed most important?

**DEPENDENCIES?**  
Have upstream and downstream dependencies been considered? Work is not ready to begin until external dependencies are completed or scheduled within a reasonable level of certainty.

**STORY FLOW**

## DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

- There is a smooth flow of top priority from a business perspective
- Story is well understood by the Team and uses language everyone comprehends (e.g. avoid acronyms, jargon, and superfluous words)
- Iteration (Sprint) planning results in a plan that seems relatively low-risk
- Team is set up to up to deliver value with limited requirement defects
- The team is able to independently execute and successfully deliver against expectations with minimal clarification on what is needed
- The team consistently adheres to DoR criteria and does not need to work around, ignore, or break the agreement

## TIPS & TRAPS

- Consider adding a Ready (sub-)state on your team's board to clarify status against DoR
- Find the "sweet-spot" of just enough information to successfully execute
- Ensure Teams and Product Owner regularly reflect on and improve the DoR
- Use time-boxes to limit how much time is spent defining on a Story, and treat items with lots of unknowns as "homework"
- Consider how the team will demo the work as DoR criteria. If it is not clear, then the story may not be ready
- Discuss how the team should behave when there is pressure to start working on a PBI when the DoR is not yet met

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- What is Definition of Ready from Agile Alliance [bit.ly/3Grso7V](http://bit.ly/3Grso7V)
- Definition of Ready from Scrum.org [bit.ly/39XzapY](http://bit.ly/39XzapY)
- Gherkin as Acceptance Criteria from Cucumber [bit.ly/3lSgGtA](http://bit.ly/3lSgGtA)
- Automate Gherkin from Cucumber [bit.ly/3wW2lMj](http://bit.ly/3wW2lMj)

