HOW TO SPLIT A USER STORY

1 PREPARE THE INPUT STORY

Does the big story satisfy INVEST* (except, perhaps, small)?

NO → Combine it with another story or otherwise reformulate it to get a good, if large, starting story.

YES → Is the story size 1/10 to 1/6 of your velocity?

- You're done.
- Continue. You need to split it.

2 APPLY THE SPLITTING PATTERNS

start here

WORKFLOW STEPS

Does the story describe a workflow?

- Can you split the story so you do the beginning and end of the workflow first and enhance with stories from the middle of the workflow?
- Can you take a thin slice through the workflow first and enhance it with more stories later?

DEFER PERFORMANCE

Does the story get much of its complexity from satisfying non-functional requirements like performance?

Could you split the story to just make it work first and then enhance it to satisfy the non-functional requirement?

OPERATIONS

Does the story include multiple operations? (e.g. is it about "managing" or "configuring" something?)

Can you split the operations into separate stories?

BUSINESS RULE VARIATIONS

Does the story have a variety of business rules? (e.g. is there a domain term in the story like "flexible dates" that suggests several variations?)

Can you split the story so you do a subset of the rules first and enhance with additional rules later?

VARIATIONS IN DATA

Does the story do the same thing to different kinds of data?

Can you split the story to process one kind of data first and enhance with the other kinds later?

SIMPLE/COMPLEX

Does the story have a simple core that provides most of the value and/or learning?

Could you split the story to do that simple core first and enhance it with later stories?

MAJOR EFFORT

When you apply the obvious split, is whichever story you do first the most difficult?

Could you group the later stories and defer the decision about which story comes first?

INTERFACE VARIATIONS

Does the story get the same kind of data via multiple interfaces?

Can you split the story to handle data from one interface first and enhance with the others later?

Does the story have a complex interface?

Is there a simple version you could do first?

last resort

BREAK OUT A SPIKE

Are you still baffled about how to split the story?

Can you find a small piece you understand well enough to start?

- Write that story first, build it, and start again at the top of this process.
- Can you define the 1-3 questions most holding you back?
  - Write a spike with those questions, do the minimum to answer them, and start again at the top of this process
  - Take a break and try again.

3 EVALUATE THE SPLIT

Are the new stories roughly equal in size?

NO → Try another pattern on the original story or the larger post-split stories.

YES → Is each story about 1/10 to 1/6 of your velocity?

NO → Try another pattern on the original story or the larger post-split stories.

YES → Do each of the stories satisfy INVEST?

- Try another pattern.
- Are there stories you can deprioritze or delete?
  - Try another pattern. You probably have waste in each of your stories.
  - Is there an obvious story to start with that gets you early value, learning, risk mitigation, etc.?
    - Try another pattern to see if you can get this.
    - You're done, though you could try another pattern to see if it works better.

* INVEST - Stories should be:
Independent
Negotiable
Valuable
Estimable
Small
Testable

AGILE FOR ALL
www.agileforall.com

Visit http://www.richardlawrence.info/splitting-user-stories/ for more info on the story splitting patterns

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Last updated 2/21/2018

Humanizing Work

Story Splitting Cheat Sheet

The INVEST Model

Stories should be: **I**ndependent, **N**egotiable, **V**aluable, **E**stimable, **S**mall, and **T**estable.

Patterns for Splitting Stories

Workflow Steps

As a content manager, I can publish a news story to the corporate website.

...I can publish a news story directly to the corporate website.
...I can publish a news story with editor review.
...I can publish a news story with legal review.

Business Rule Variations

As a user, I can search for flights with flexible dates.

...as "n days between x and y."
...as "a weekend in December."
...as "± n days of x and y.

Major Effort

As a user, I can pay for my flight with VISA, MasterCard, Diners Club, or American Express.

...I can pay with one credit card type (of VISA, MC, DC, AMEX).
...I can pay with all four credit card types (VISA, MC, DC, AMEX).

Simple/Complex

As a user, I can search for flights between two destinations.

...specifying a max number of stops.
...including nearby airports.
...using flexible dates.
...etc.

Variations in Data

As a content manager, I can create news stories.

...in English.
...in Japanese.
...in Arabic.
...etc.

Data Entry Methods

As a user, I can search for flights between two destinations.

...using simple date input.
...with a fancy calendar UI.

Defer Performance

As a user, I can search for flights between two destinations.

...(slow - just get it done, show a "searching" animation).
...(in under 5 seconds).

Operations (e.g. CRUD)

As a user, I can manage my account.

...I can sign up for an account.
...I can edit my account settings.
...I can cancel my account.

Break Out a Spike

As a user, I can pay by credit card.

Investigate credit card processing.
Implement credit card processing (as one or more stories).

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