

Scrum teams can only pick a backlog item for a sprint if they can get it “Done” within that sprint. The Scrum Guide describes the Refinement meeting (aka Grooming) to break down big features into manageable, detailed and estimated items (often user stories). Items can be groomed several times until they are “Ready” (or discarded). Grooming may not take up more than 10% of the dev team’s time.

Although it’s not part of the Scrum Guide many product owners and dev teams agree on a “Definition of Ready”. The DoR is a checklist that captures their shared understanding of what criteria an item (often a user story) has to meet to start working on it.

What can you expect when a product owner declares a backlog item “Ready”?



Definition of Ready

Examples

These are two DoRs from the same company. Neither of these is better or worse than the other. Each DoR reflects the joint expectations of PO and dev team at that time. They updated the DoR whenever they discovered gaps.

Team Kraken, 2013

- Legal
Are we sure we’re not violating any regulations?
 - Analytics
How will our BAs get all the necessary data to assess if customers use our feature?
 - Helpdesk
Can Danny see the result of our feature?
 - Test Cases
At the latest at Planning we will define the most important test cases together
- Context: Team builds features with customer-facing web interfaces. The company has been using Scrum for 3 years. They go live at least once per week.

Team Planet Express, 2015

- Story is groomed and estimated
 - Everybody understands why the story is valuable
 - Story is as small as possible while still delivering value
 - Document new agreements
- Context: Team builds an API for a SaaS product. Team members have been using Scrum for years. They release features as soon as they’re “done”.

