

Product Backlog Starter

Describe one backlog item, discuss its value and decide what happens next. This is an item worksheet to help you start, rather than a complete backlog management system.

Start with the problem

A product backlog is an ordered list of work that could improve a product. Start with the person who needs help and the problem they face. A proposed feature is one possible response, so check the need before committing to a solution.

Complete one item together

- Describe the need. Who is affected, what are they trying to do and where do they get stuck?
- Record the evidence. Use feedback, observation or data. Label assumptions that still need checking.
- State the outcome. Explain the user benefit and its connection to the Product Goal, the longer-term objective for the product in Scrum.
- Write acceptance criteria. These are observable conditions for this particular item to be accepted.
- Discuss order and uncertainty. Consider value, urgency, risk, dependencies and effort. Explain why this item belongs ahead of others.

Keep the detail proportionate

Use the blank page for one item, then copy it as needed. Add more detail as an item moves closer to delivery. A user story is an optional way to express a need: As a [person], I want [capability], so that [benefit].

In Scrum, the Product Owner is accountable for backlog management and ordering; Developers size the work. An Increment is a usable addition to the product. The Definition of Done sets its quality standard. Item-specific acceptance criteria do not replace it. User stories and this worksheet are optional practices, not Scrum requirements.

Next step: bring one completed item to a conversation with the people who would deliver it.

Scrum reference: scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html

A completed backlog item

Fictional example: a learning website wants to help readers return to a useful guide. This is an illustration, not a claim about Coded Female readers or site functionality.

Item and user need

Item: Save a guide for later.

User: a reader learning alongside a full-time job.

Problem: the reader cannot easily find a guide again after leaving the website.

Evidence and assumptions

Illustrative evidence: 4 of 6 interview participants described losing useful links. Assumption to check: an on-site save option would be more useful than their existing bookmarks. Speak to more readers before choosing the solution.

Outcome and Product Goal

Outcome: readers can return to a saved guide without searching again.

Product Goal: make the website a useful place for readers to continue their learning. The save option is one possible contribution to that goal.

Acceptance criteria

- A signed-in reader can save a guide from its article page.
- The saved guide appears in that reader's saved list, with its title and a working link.
- Saving the same guide twice does not create a duplicate.
- The reader can remove the guide from the list.

Order and delivery questions

Proposed order: after reliable sign-in is available. Reason: the saved list depends on an account, and demand still needs checking.

Questions: do readers want an account? What happens when a guide is removed? Can the save control be used with a keyboard?

Next decision

The Product Owner and team will review reader feedback and delivery effort before deciding whether to build the save option. A prototype could help test the idea first.

Your backlog item

Complete one page per item. Keep unknowns visible and use the notes to support a conversation, rather than treating every field as a gate.

Item title and date

User and problem

Evidence and assumptions

Intended outcome and connection to the Product Goal

Acceptance criteria

Proposed order and reason

Dependencies and open questions

Next action and person responsible
