

# Story Card Estimating

The estimation of Agile story cards has a couple of important functions;

- increases the collaboration in the team to gain a common understanding of what is required
- is an important input into the calculation of how much product a team can build in an iteration (the team velocity)

Rather than trying to estimate how long something will take in days, or ideal hours, story points are used to give a relative measure. By setting a base line story (one that is well understood, and can easily be completed within a single iteration), and assigning it as 5 story points, the effort relative to this base line story can then be estimated – is it double the effort?, half the effort? Within a few iterations, the team usually become very confident and fast at doing this relative estimating.

Collaboration and accuracy is increased by using what are commonly known as planning poker cards. The numbers on the cards are a variation on the Fibonacci series, and deliberately get less accurate as they get bigger.

By everyone displaying the card that represents their story point estimate at the same time, there is less chance of being led, even unintentionally, by other team members estimates.

By discussing the reasons for the largest and smallest estimates (known as Wide band Delphi), the team collaborates to arrive at an estimate that everyone in the team agrees to. The process of estimating and then discussion is repeated until there is an agreed estimate. This usually happens within 2 or 3 repeats.

Story card estimation is useful as an indication of which stories need to be either elaborated further, or split into smaller stories, to give a higher confidence that they will be able to be delivered in a single iteration.

