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Writing User Stories

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Product owners …

- … always have *unlimited desires* but *limited resources*
- … have requirements, which necessitate communication with those who can provide the solution to said requirement.

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Negotiation over Contracts

- "Since users [product owners] don't know how to solve their problems, we need to stop *asking …* and to *involve* them instead" - Mike Cohn
- Involving a product owner in the refinement of their requirements via User Stories saves:
  - **Time**: would you rather write a novella of requirements or simply an outline?
  - **Money**: Legal fees in contract review; contractual change orders

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A Story template

"*As a* <User or role>
I want <Business Functionality>
So that <Business Justification>"

Example:

As a Account Holder,
I want to be able to withdraw funds from my checking account,
So that I can buy some bling.

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Stories are not

- "*mini*" Use Cases
- a complete specification
- a contract
- intended to be interpreted without a Product Owner

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What is an Epic?

- Are usually compound Stories, that can be broken down into several smaller, more focused stories
- May encompass enough work for several Sprints (iterations)

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User Stories guidelines

- ***Testable***. Tangible acceptance tests can be written against any delivered software
- The scope of the User Story is manage-able enough for the team to provide an ***Estimate***
- ***Independent*** and do not rely on other Stories
- ***Sized appropriately***. Have a level of effort which the team can comfortably achieve in the duration of a single iteration

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Some places to consider breaking Epics

- At C.R.U.D boundaries
- At system boundaries where two systems interface
- At Happy-Path / Exception-Path boundaries

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At CRUD boundaries

- This solution is commonly used in environments that interact with a database
- Example:

  As an account holder, I want to be open a checking account …

  As an account holder, I want to deposit a check into my checking account …

  As an account holder, I want to view the updated balance in my checking account …

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At system boundaries

- This solution is commonly used in environments where there are a large number of legacy systems
- And can be used:
  - When there is a clear separation between two systems
  - Where the interface between the two systems is well understood
- Beware of creating dependencies between two different projects

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At Happy-Path / Exception-Path boundaries:

- Commonly used when transitioning from Use Cases
- The happy-path scenario may still need to be decomposed
- Breaking down Use Cases can be a lot of work … it may be simpler to just start using User Stories

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What are Acceptance Criteria?

- Product Owner *expectations* on what will be delivered
- Acceptance Criteria can include:
  - Functionality that the system will perform
  - Interface look and feel
  - Necessary documentation (eg. SOX compliance documentation)

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Guidelines: Acceptance Criteria

- Be explicit
  - "The system will display the date." …
  - In what format? Is "2006, April 1st" acceptable?
- Provide examples for clarity
  - "The system date will be displayed in the format 1/4/06"
- List any assumptions that the team may not be fully aware of

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Guidelines: Acceptance Criteria

- Include what you'd expect the system to do

  "The checking account balance will be updated with the amount entered by the user."

- And where ambiguous, what the system is not expected to do

  "Reconciliation with the amount of funds deposited is not expected at this time."

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Questions?

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References

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