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Launch Tip of the Month
March 2024

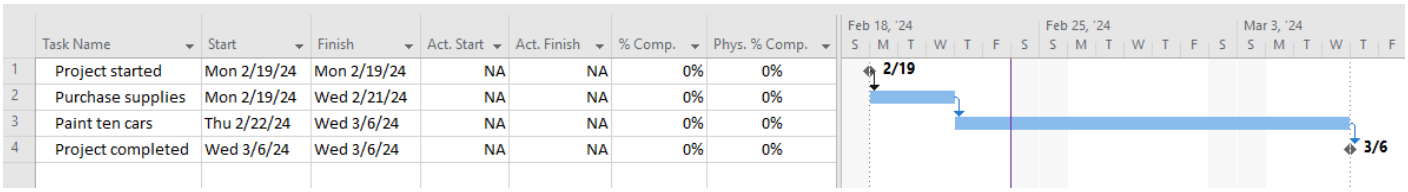
When updating a Microsoft Project plan, it is imperative to understand the definitions of certain important fields as well as the impact of entering values into these fields.

Imagine the following situation:

Your company created a project plan to paint ten cars. The plan calls for you to purchase supplies over a three-day period. Then, you need to paint ten cars over a ten-day period.

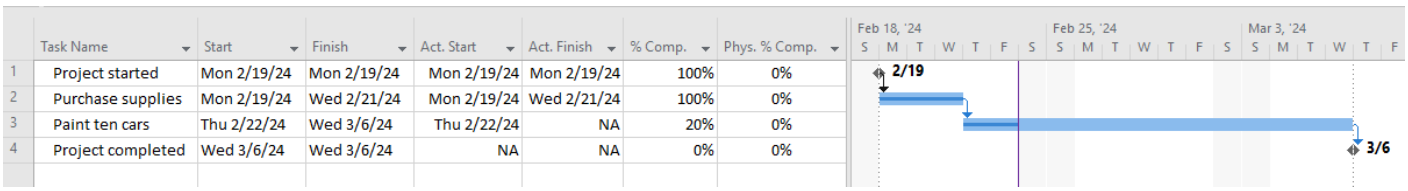
The project starts on time and the supplies are purchased between 2/19/24 and 2/21/24 as planned. You start painting cars on 2/22/24, and on the first two days, you paint five cars. At the end of the second day, you decide to set a Status Date of 2/23/24 and update your project. You added a purple line to the Gantt chart to display the Status Date.

When you finish updating the project, what value should be in the % Complete field for the task named Paint ten cars???



	Task Name	Start	Finish	Act. Start	Act. Finish	% Comp.	Phys. % Comp.
1	Project started	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	NA	NA	0%	0%
2	Purchase supplies	Mon 2/19/24	Wed 2/21/24	NA	NA	0%	0%
3	Paint ten cars	Thu 2/22/24	Wed 3/6/24	NA	NA	0%	0%
4	Project completed	Wed 3/6/24	Wed 3/6/24	NA	NA	0%	0%

Did you say 50% because you painted five of the ten cars? Surprisingly, this is incorrect. It should say 20%.



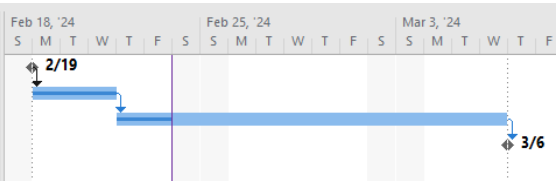
	Task Name	Start	Finish	Act. Start	Act. Finish	% Comp.	Phys. % Comp.
1	Project started	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	100%	0%
2	Purchase supplies	Mon 2/19/24	Wed 2/21/24	Mon 2/19/24	Wed 2/21/24	100%	0%
3	Paint ten cars	Thu 2/22/24	Wed 3/6/24	Thu 2/22/24	NA	20%	0%
4	Project completed	Wed 3/6/24	Wed 3/6/24	NA	NA	0%	0%

But why? The % Complete field does not represent the percentage of the work you have accomplished! Rather, it represents the percentage of the duration you worked. Since you worked two of the ten days that were scheduled to paint cars, you worked 20% of the planned duration. We use the Physical % Complete field to store information about how much of the job we have

done! Therefore, the % Complete field should be 20% and the Physical % Complete should be 50%.

Entering a percentage into the Physical % Complete field has no impact on any other fields. Changes made to the % Complete, % Work Complete, Actual Work, or Actual Duration fields do impact other fields.

	Task Name	Start	Finish	Act. Start	Act. Finish	% Comp.	Phys. % Comp.
1	Project started	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	Mon 2/19/24	100%	0%
2	Purchase supplies	Mon 2/19/24	Wed 2/21/24	Mon 2/19/24	Wed 2/21/24	100%	100%
3	Paint ten cars	Thu 2/22/24	Wed 3/6/24	Thu 2/22/24	NA	20%	50%
4	Project completed	Wed 3/6/24	Wed 3/6/24	NA	NA	0%	0%



Useful Definitions
% Complete – the percentage of the task's DURATION that has been completed
Physical % Complete – percentage of the TASK that has been completed
% Work Complete – percentage of the HOURS OF WORK completed

Useful Calculations
When you specify Physical % Complete…
No other fields are affected!

When you specify % Complete…
Actual Duration = Duration * % Complete
Remaining Duration = Duration - Actual Duration

When you specify % Work Complete…
Actual Work = Work * % Work Complete

When you specify Actual Work…
% Work Complete = Actual Work/Work
Remaining Work = Work - Actual Work

When you specify Actual Duration…
% Complete = Actual Duration/Duration
Remaining Duration = Duration - Actual Duration

Want to learn more about Microsoft Project? Check out our featured course below.

Microsoft Project: Advanced Features
6 Hours

- Using PERT to calculate durations
- Using Task Paths
- Splitting tasks
- Creating recurring tasks
- Activating and inactivating tasks
- Using the mouse in the Gantt Chart and Calendar
- Review of building a project
- Creating and linking an external resource pool

- The Resource Information dialog box
- Modifying resource assignments
- Assigning resources, effort driven scheduling and task types
- Setting a baseline
- Entering actuals
- Updating a project as complete through a date
- Rescheduling uncompleted work
- Setting and displaying multiple baselines
- Displaying a project summary task
- Accessing built-in views and creating custom views
- Formatting tasks on the Gantt chart
- Displaying the current date and the status date in the Gantt chart
- Customizing the timescale portion of the Gantt chart view
- Formatting task bars based on task type
- Customizing the timescale
- Accessing built-in tables and creating custom tables
- Formatting text in the Entry table based on task type
- Creating custom fields
    - Adding a lookup field to a custom field
    - Adding a calculation to a custom field
    - Adding graphical indicators to a custom field
    - Adding an outline code to a custom field
- Using standard and highlight filters
- Creating custom filters
- Sorting project information
- Using and customizing groups
- Creating custom reports
- Using the Organizer to manage custom objects
- Customizing WBS codes
- Creating master projects with subprojects
- Using cross project linking
- Creating overhead tasks
- Creating a look ahead
- Setting work contours
- Using hyperlinks
- Saving a view as a PDF
- Using the Timeline view
- Understanding program options

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