

Two weeks in the life of Foo Team meetings

A breakdown of the all-team meeting that the Foo Team runs, and how we run them.

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All meetings: baseline expectations

All of our recurring meetings are scheduled based on folks availability (see [Foo Team Scheduling](#)).

All meeting invites should include:

- Link to Zoom meeting
- Purpose/goal statement
- Link to notes (if applicable)
 - Make a copy of the [notes template](#) in your designated Notes folder and link that
 - It doesn't even need to be filled out yet!
- Agenda (if applicable)
 - If this is a longer meeting, an agenda is always appreciated

- An Agenda can be added later, at the top of the handy notes document you so thoughtfully linked in your original invitation!

Cadence

Weekly meetings could take place on any day of the week, decide what works for your team. If it's possible, schedule longer meetings back-to-back with standup so you can roll straight from one into another, and get out early if time allows.

Week 1					Week 2				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Standup	Planning Standup	Standup	Standup	Retro Standup	Planning Standup	Standup	Standup	Standup	Big Picture Standup

Daily

Standup

- **Duration:** 30 minutes
- **Documentation:** We use a Kanban board.
- **Body of meeting invite:**
Leader of the standup:
\${[LINK_TO_YOUR_STANDUP_ROTATION_SHEET](#)}

Questions to discuss:

- Obstacles that I need someone (from the team) to remove
- Things I am going to get done today
- Things I have done since yesterday's meeting

- **Thoughts:**
 - As a remote team, this is our one guaranteed daily(ish) synchronous time

- A bit of water cooler chat is encouraged and healthy
- The person leading standup should share their screen and write an update on every card
 - Real-time notes force a tight feedback loop and quickly surface this disconnect
 - Sometimes, the update someone is saying doesn't match the update others are hearing
 - Questions to address:
 - Tease out blockers, and potential topics folks will spin on
 - Help connect folks that need to knowledge-share
 - Also consider: "What information would you want if you were backtracking from an Incident?"
 - Are related pull requests accessible from the card?
 - Are team decisions about small, ad-hoc tradeoffs captured?

Weekly

Planning

- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Documentation:** [\[HOWTO\] Configure Spartez Agile Poker](#)
 - The bulk of this meeting will be used to run [planning poker](#).
 - Spartez Agile Poker has an async integration that allows folks to point the cards on their own time at their own speed.
 - When Foo Team started pointing cards, the biggest pain point folks discussed was how slow planning poker can be when everyone has to wait for everyone else to read and estimate.
 - Other tools could absolutely be used. Foo Team uses Spartez Agile Poker because it is functional.
- **Body of meeting invite:**
Start each meeting with a discussion of what our most important goals are. This should drive the conversation about what we choose to prioritize.

Make sure to get your story point estimates into Agile Poker before the meeting!

`${LINK_TO_YOUR_KANBAN_BOARD}`

- **Sample (informal) agenda:**
 - Review everyone's poker estimates and discuss.
 - Navigate to Foo Team Epic Kanban (a Kanban board of the in progress epics) and discuss how Next Up ties into the higher-level team goals/work.
 - Navigate to Foo Team Kanban and begin Standup.

- **Thoughts:**

- This meeting requires prework.
 - Backlog grooming needs to be completed sufficiently in advance of the meeting such that the engineers on the team have a stack of cards to point and time to point them.
 - Take this into consideration when choosing what day is best for the meeting.
- What to look for while running planning poker:
 - First and foremost, look at differences in the points that folks have provided.
 - Time estimates are notoriously poor in Engineering. What you should *most* care about is shaking out confusion and knowledge gaps, and to use this valuable synchronous time to mitigate those issues.
 - Questions to consider:
 - Who gave high points? Are they lacking context in the domain? Is the card poorly scoped?
 - Who gave low points? What information can they share with the team?
 - Is there a large seniority gap between the folks that gave the different estimates? How has that impacted their estimates?
 - Questions to ask:
 - "[Senior dev], what do you know about this work that makes you think it will be relatively small, what can you share with the rest of us to close that gap?"
 - "[Dev with expertise in a space], what concerns do you have about this work? Seems like you have some ideas of hotspots we should be aware of."
 - "I wouldn't know where to start if I picked up this work. Where could I go for an example or more information?"
 - Things to be aware of when asking questions:
 - Don't make people look bad. Don't always ask the junior person to explain why they think something will be hard. Your goal is to expose information, not people.
 - Foo Team uses the Fibonacci sequence to size cards. Any card larger than 5 points needs to be broken up.
 - Points aren't time butttttt there's some overlap. 8 points is about two weeks of work.
 - Even a 5-point card is getting pretty dicy. There is likely to be poorly understood work on that card.
 - If a card is poorly-scoped and causing concern, change it to a timeboxed spike, point accordingly, and carry on.
 - We retroactively point bugs because they are, in theory, of unknown size before they are solved
- Having the meeting at the beginning of the week often feels "right" because it sets the tone for the week's focus.

Fortnightly

Retrospective

- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Documentation:** [Retrospective template](#)
- **Body of meeting invite:**
Retro Doc: \${LINK_TO_YOUR_RETRO_DOC}

Gentlest of reminders:

Please add topics that you'd like for us to discuss to the notes as early as possible.

This will allow folks in other time zones to provide input, and for us to maximize our synchronous time together.

- **Thoughts:**
 - Foo Team has a Slack reminder asking folks to populate the doc with topics asynchronously.
 - Foo Team's manager sometimes populates the Retro doc with team-appropriate concerns that come up during 1:1s (i.e. frequency of pairing, knowledge silos, how folks should do code review/what tone is appropriate).

Big Picture

- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Documentation:** [Big Picture agenda](#)
- **Body of meeting invite:**
Back by popular demand! This meeting provides a place for Product to keep Engineering in the loop about the grander vision of what we're doing and why.
- **Thoughts:**
 - If you have a product manager or similar person that can paint a picture of where the team is trying to go and how the team's work fits into that grander vision, make time for them to present to the team!
 - This meeting should provide broader directional context for folks on the team so that:
 - They understand the value of their work.
 - They're better-equipped to make decisions that roll up into the company's goals.
 - Foo Team only loosely follows an agenda in this meeting, it's a PM's choice conversation. Other topics have included:
 - OKR planning.

- Informal presentations on how team metrics are tracked, often a screenshare of how the PM (or engineering manager) pulls metrics, i.e. out of Segment on user adoption, or from Plandek on team velocity.
- Foo Team alternates Big Picture and Retro meetings in the same time slot.