

Kanban board and flow

Keep a flow of work moving and predictable, by showing all of it and limiting how much is in progress at once.

READY · MAX 4	BUILD · MAX 5	TEST · MAX 3	DONE
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Illustrative. Build and Test are full ($5 + 3 = 8$ in progress), so nothing new starts. At 4 finished a week: $8 \div 4 = 2$ weeks each.

WHAT IT IS

David J. Anderson (2010) set out the Kanban method for knowledge work. There are no sprints: items flow across a board. Make the work **visible**, **limit work in progress** (WIP) in each column, and **manage the flow**. **Cycle time**: from start to finish. **Throughput**: items finished per week. **Little's law** (1961): in a steady system, average cycle time = WIP $\div$ throughput.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Map the real steps of the work as columns.
- 02 One card per item, so no work is hidden.
- 03 Write a WIP limit in each column's header.
- 04 Pull work only when a column has room.
- 05 Column full? Help finish before starting more.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: After a city moves resident parking permits online, a small team fixes the problems reported through January, when most residents renew: 10 fixes in progress, 5 finished a week.

Each fix takes $10 \div 5 = 2$ weeks on average. The project manager puts every fix on one board with limits of 3 in Fix and 2 in Test, so 5 are in progress. If 5 still finish a week, a fix takes $5 \div 5 = 1$ week.

In the exam: Sketch a small board with its WIP limits, say what happens when a column is full, and use Little's law to explain a waiting time.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months. Its 6 integration specialists serve every city project, and a portfolio meeting decides their work.

The project manager proposes one board for their work, with 6 items in progress at most, one each. The portfolio meeting orders the Ready column. At 2 finished a week, an item takes $6 \div 2 = 3$ weeks, so every project can plan with that.

In the exam: Explain a board shared across teams or projects: who orders the queue, how the limits were agreed, and what the flow data told the decision makers.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.5.4 Time: Kanban charts among the scheduling methods in its knowledge (p. 112)	Guide: Kanban boards limit work in progress; cycle and lead time (pp. 212–213); hybrids (p. 55). Exam outline: Process task 8	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §3.5.2: work-in-progress reviews clear bottlenecks in iterative projects. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objective 21c

Sources: Anderson, Kanban (2010); Little (1961), Little's law; IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

Key: IPMA = International Project Management Association; ICB4 = IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline (4.5.4 etc.: its competence elements); PMI = Project Management Institute; PMBOK® Guide = PMI's body-of-knowledge guide; PMP® = PMI's Project Management Professional; APM = Association for Project Management. Unofficial study material for IPMA®, PMI® and APM exams. Not affiliated with, endorsed by or approved by IPMA, PMI or APM, and not an accredited or endorsed training provider. IPMA® and IPMA ICB® are registered trademarks of IPMA in Switzerland and other countries. PMI, PMP, CAPM and PMBOK are registered marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. APM is a trade mark of the Association for Project Management. Other marks belong to their owners. PMP® exam facts are from PMI's public PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); check the current version on pmi.org. APM's qualifications are its own; this series is not an APM Accredited Provider or APM Endorsed. Examples use a fictional city and its projects. Levels (this series' labels): Mid-level = moderately complex projects (IPMA Level C, PMI's PMP®); Senior = complex projects and people (IPMA Level B, APM's Chartered Project Professional).

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