

Team development stages

Recognise where a team stands in its development, and change what you do as its leader so that the team can move on.

STAGE	WHAT YOU SEE	YOUR MOVE
Forming	Polite, careful, unsure of roles	Clear goal and roles; time to meet
Storming	Open disagreement on work and roles	Let views out; keep them on the work
Norming	Own rules; trust grows	Let the team set norms; step back
Performing	Solves most problems itself	Delegate; remove obstacles
Adjourning	The work ends; people move on	Thank, capture lessons, next roles

Stage names after Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman and Jensen (1977); the signs, moves and layout are our own. Teams can stall, slip back or skip a stage.

WHAT IT IS

Bruce Tuckman (1965) reviewed studies of small groups and named four stages: **forming, storming, norming and performing**. With Mary Ann Jensen (1977) he added **adjourning**. It is a pattern, not a timetable: teams stall, slip back when people join or leave, or skip a stage. As a team matures, its leader moves from direction to delegation.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Watch the signs: how people talk, disagree and decide.
- 02 Adjust your move: less direction, more delegation.
- 03 When people join or leave, form the team again.
- 04 Plan the end: thanks, lessons, each person's next role.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team of 7 staff and a supplier team of 5 has eight months to move resident parking permits online. They start as two groups; in month 3 they argue about who tests what.

In week one, the project manager runs a joint start: one goal, clear roles, a working agreement both groups write (forming). When they argue (storming), she keeps it on the work; the team agrees who tests what and adds it to the agreement (norming).

In the exam: Name the stage from what you saw, your move and why, and what changed. Mention a step back after people joined or left.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, in 3 groups of services; staff from 2 suppliers and the owners of 9 older systems come and go with each group.

The project manager plans a fresh start for each group, with one working agreement for all parties. She coaches her team leads to read their team's stage, and plans each ending with line managers: thanks, lessons, next roles.

In the exam: Show that you designed team development for many teams: planned fresh starts, developed other leaders, and agreed people's release with line managers.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.4.6.1, p. 81: the leader's activities change as the team matures. Knowledge: team life cycle models, none named	Guide: the Tuckman ladder, p. 211 (teams may get stuck, regress or skip). Exam outline: People, task 3	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.4.1: five stages in APM's words, inspired by Tuckman, ending in reintegration. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objective 13a

Sources: Tuckman (1965); Tuckman & Jensen (1977); 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 (4.4.6 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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