

Critical path analysis

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Critical path analysis is a simple business tool used to identify those activities and tasks that need to be given priority in project management.

The critical path is the sequence of activities that must be given priority in a given project in which there are several pathways involving inter-related activities.

In the following illustration you can see that there are two sets of activities involved in completing a project - Set 1 and Set 2:

Set 1

Task A - 3 days

Task B - 5 days

Task C - 6 days

Total time - 14 days

Set 2

Task D - 4 days

Task E - 2 days

Task F - 5 days

Total time - 11 days

Typically a critical path diagram, e.g. for building a new bridge, or house will be far more complicated than this because there will be far more stages involved in the project. However, the process is essentially the same.

The job of the project manager is to allocate time and resources to make sure that the project is completed on time without wasting resources.