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Planning Poker

At the estimation meeting, each estimator is given one deck of the cards. All decks have identical sets of cards in them. Rules:

- A Moderator, who will not play, chairs the meeting.
- The Product Manager provides a short overview. The team is given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss to clarify assumptions and risks. A summary of the discussion is recorded by the Project Manager.
- Each individual lays a card face down representing their estimate. Units used vary - they can be days duration, ideal days or story points. During discussion, numbers must not be mentioned at all in relation to feature size to avoid anchoring.
- Everyone calls their cards simultaneously by turning them over.
- People with high estimates and low estimates are given a soap box to offer their justification for their estimate and then discussion continues.
- Repeat the estimation process until a consensus is reached. The developer who was likely to own the deliverable has a large portion of the "consensus vote", although the Moderator can negotiate the consensus.
- An egg timer is used to ensure that discussion is structured; the Moderator or the Project Manager may at any point turn over the egg timer and when it runs out all discussion must cease and another round of poker is played. The structure in the conversation is re-introduced by the soap boxes.

The cards are numbered as they are to account for the fact that the longer an estimate is, the more uncertainty it contains. Thus, if a developer wants to play a 6 he is forced to reconsider and either work through that some of the perceived uncertainty does not exist and play a 5, or accept a conservative estimate accounting for the uncertainty and play an 8.

From Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planning_poker



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