



Task numbering in MS-Project

Formal project management demands codes or numbers for each task in a Work Breakdown structure. In MS-Project choose from the top menu Tools:Options:View Tab: Show Outline Number so that an automatic outline number appears in the task name field. You can also display a default WBS field that holds the same data.

Difficulty occurs when you delete a task and MSP rennumbers the tasks. Look what happens to the WBS numbers in the Example A (part of Luxemburg's world domination plan) when the task *Conquer Holland* is scratched in Example B. Conquering France and Conquering Germany are renumbered.

Example A

Example B

	WBS	Task Name	Duration		WBS	Task Name	Duration
1	1	1 Europe	165d	1	1	1 Europe	143d
2	1.1	1.1 Conquer Belgium	33d	2	1.1	1.1 Conquer Belgium	33d
3	1.2	1.2 Conquer Holland	22d	3	1.2	1.2 Conquer France	44d
4	1.3	1.3 Conquer France	44d	4	1.3	1.3 Conquer Germany	66d
5	1.4	1.4 Conquer Germany	66d	5		Africa	70d
6	2	2 Africa	70d	6	2.1	2.1 Conquer Tunisia	33d
7	2.1	2.1 Conquer Tunisia	33d	7	2.2	2.2 Conquer Algeria	22d
8	2.2	2.2 Conquer Algeria	22d	8	2.3	2.3 Conquer Morocco	15d
9	2.3	2.3 Conquer Morocco	15d				

Deleting numbers within outline sections can reduce the use of task numbers especially if you want to link them to cost codes or use them as sort keys.

One way out of this dilemma is to display the Unique ID Field. This field is like a record number as you might expect to see in conventional databases. The Unique ID Field does not change when a task is deleted. If, instead of Holland, Luxemburg decides to knock off Switzerland before France, notice the Unique ID Number of that task is now out of sequence.

	Unique ID	Task Name	Duration
1	1	1 Europe	231d
2	2	Conquer Belgium	33d
3	10	Conquer Switzerland	88d
4	4	Conquer France	44d
5	5	Conquer Germany	66d

Another strategy for retaining reliable, permanent Task ID numbers is to hard code them. You can hard code a numbering system directly into the task name field when you add or insert tasks. With this approach you can easily create filters in very large projects to break them down into smaller chunks.

An alternative way to introduce hard-coded numbers is to complete your project plan, display the WBS field and then copy and past those generated numbers into a text field. When you delete a task, the text field values will not change.