



# Ten Tips for Writing Great User Stories


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# Story Time



- A user story describes functionality that is valuable to a user or a customer.
- It tells a story about how someone uses the product.

# A Sample User Story

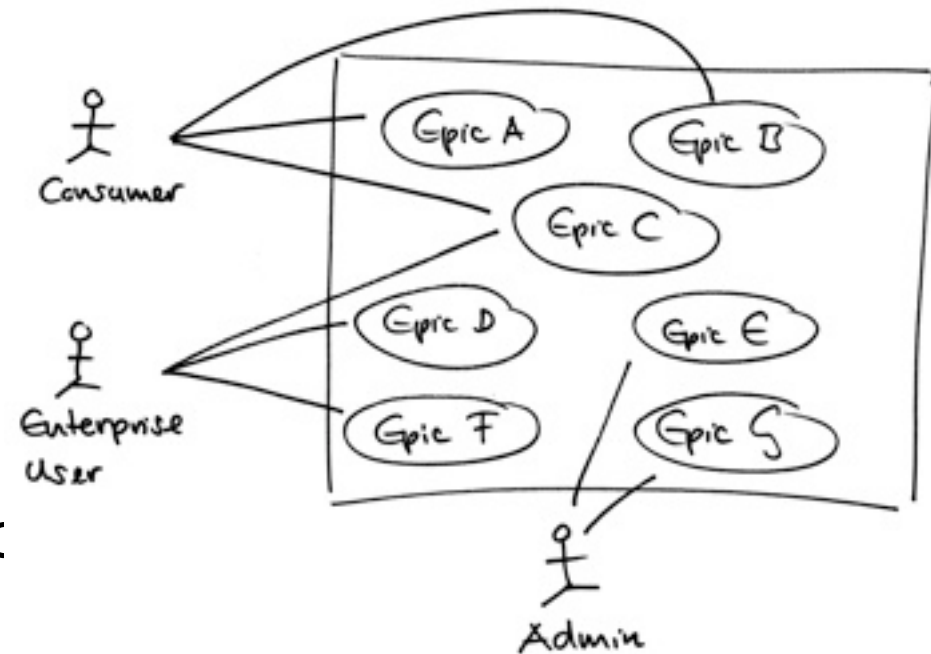
*As a conference visitor,  
I want to attend a talk to  
acquire new knowledge.*

## *Acceptance Criteria*

- I won't fall asleep or play with my iPhone.*
- By the end of the talk, I can correctly answer three questions about the subject.*
- The talk should be no longer than 45 min.*

# Focus on the User

- Describe the product from the perspective of your target users and customers
- Use user roles in your stories
- You may find it helpful to do some lightweight modeling



# Engage in a Conversation

- Use stories to facilitate a dialogue between the team and the users, the customers and the other stakeholders
- A story is not a specification but captures the essence of a conversation about the features of a product
- This encourages creativity

# Story Writing is Teamwork

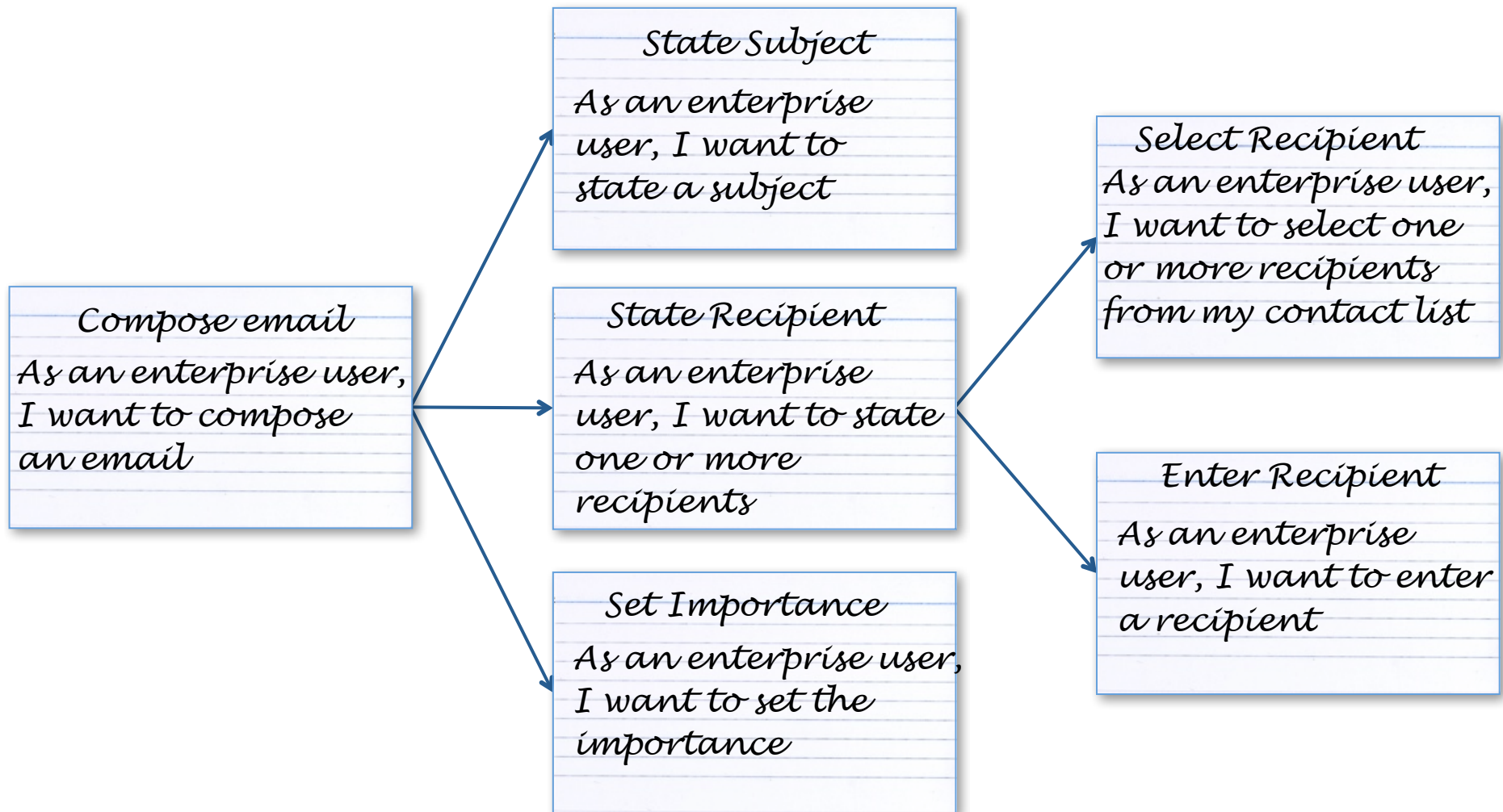
- Collaborate to discover and describe your user stories
- Leverage the creativity and knowledge of the team and the stakeholders
- Have regular product backlog grooming workshop to jointly refine your user stories

# Keep it Simple

- Use language that is easy to understand
  - Avoid confusing and ambiguous terms
  - Use active voice
- Focus on what's important, and leave out non-essential information
  - Rewrite your stories to improve them
  - Writing is an inherently iterative process



# Progressively Refine your Stories



# Use Acceptance Criteria

- Add acceptance criteria to your user stories as you break epics into detailed stories
- Acceptance criteria complement the story's narrative, state when the story is complete, and ensure that it is testable
- My rule of thumb: Detailed stories should have three to five acceptance criteria

# Group Stories into Themes

- Each theme represents a product capability or a goal; it groups related stories
- Themes have several benefits
  - It is easier to check for completeness and consistency
  - We can first prioritise the themes, then the stories
  - Find the right stories is easier

# Use Paper Cards

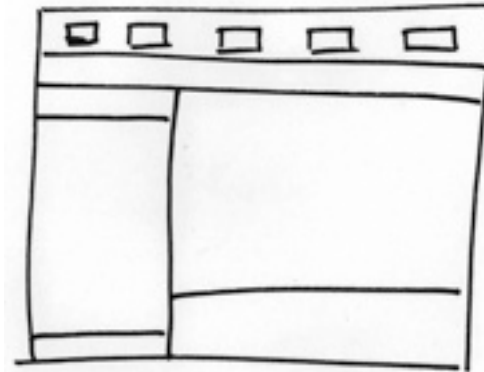
- Paper cards facilitate collaboration: Everyone can grab a card and write down an idea
- They can be easily grouped on the table or wall to check for consistency and completeness
- If you have to use an electronic tool, print out stories on cards for your story writing workshops; transfer the new information back into the tool

# Visualise your Stories

- Stories want to communicate
  - Put them up on the wall so that everyone can see them
  - Don't hide them on a network drive or in the corporate intranet jungle!
- If you are short of wall space
  - Ask yourself if all your stories are really necessary to create a successful product
  - Consider displaying only the high priority ones

# Some Things aren't Stories

- Use prototypes or sketches to capture user interface requirements



- Use constraint cards to describe operational qualities

## *Performance Constraint*

*The system must answer any request in less than one second*

## *Acceptance Criteria*

- *10 000 concurrent read and write transactions take place*
- *Each transaction has a data size of 500 KB*
- *The system configuration is "small enterprise"*

# Famous Last Words

*“Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.”*

Hannah Arendt

# More Information

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