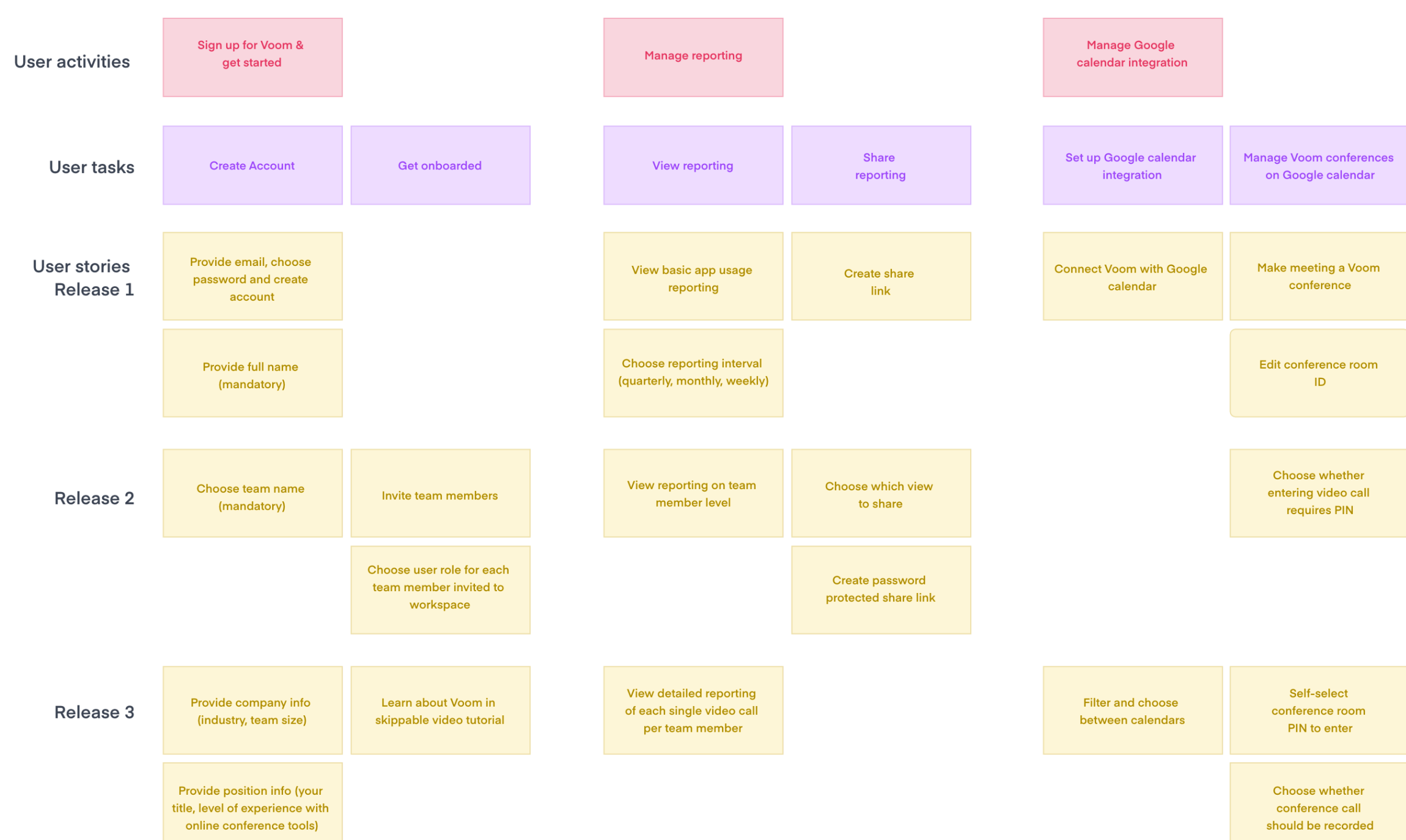# How To Use the Story Mapping Method?

WHAT IS STORY MAPPING?

Story mapping is a widely used method of ordering user stories along different dimensions to provide a big picture of how they fit within the overall user experience. This map arranges the essential steps of the customer journey on the horizontal axis in a chronological order, guided by how the user would perform said tasks in their interaction with the product.

The vertical axis describes criticality or necessity, and different user stories are therefore arranged vertically, top to bottom, based on importance.

This highlights the importance of differentiating importance in order to generate strategic release plans.

The beauty of doing this is that after you've completed your story map, you'll be able to visualize all the possible ways in which your users could interact with your product. This allows you to map the flow of their behavior as they progress from their first interaction through to their last step of their objective with your product.

	Create Account	Get onboarded	View reporting	Share reporting	Set up Google calendar integration	Manage Voom conferences on Google calendar
User activities	Sign up for Voom & get started		Manage reporting		Manage Google calendar integration	
User tasks	Create Account	Get onboarded	View reporting	Share reporting	Set up Google calendar integration	Manage Voom conferences on Google calendar
User stories Release 1	Provide email, choose password and create account Provide full name (mandatory)		View basic app usage reporting Choose reporting interval (quarterly, monthly, weekly)	Create share link	Connect Voom with Google calendar	Make meeting a Voom conference Edit conference room ID
Release 2	Choose team name (mandatory)	Invite team members Choose user role for each team member invited to workspace	View reporting on team member level	Choose which view to share Create password protected share link		Choose whether entering video call requires PIN
Release 3	Provide company info (industry, team size) Provide position info (your title, level of experience with online conference tools)	Learn about Voom in skippable video tutorial	View detailed reporting of each single video call per team member		Filter and choose between calendars	Self-select conference room PIN to enter Choose whether conference call should be recorded

WHY SHOULD I USE STORY MAPPING?

This type of backlog organization has quite a few advantages when it comes to prioritization and execution of your product. Firstly, it is a visual tool that really allows stakeholders, your development team, and clients, to get a full picture of how users are interacting with the product. This creates common ground for those who often get caught up in their own details. It happens to the best of us! This big picture will help identify issues or gaps you might have previously overlooked.

Secondly, when it comes to prioritization, this framework provides teams with valuable insights as to how to release product iterations with increasing sophistication. By defining these, the team is empowered to complete and deliver end-to-end versions more quickly, allowing you to rapidly validate concepts.

Last but not least; you can apply it to any stage of your product life cycle.

For MVPs: it'll allow you to pinpoint what the minimum functionality should be in order to test and validate the concept. Being in the customer's shoes will prevent you from overlooking aspects about the user experience.

Trying to improve your product? This framework will give you a full overview of what new features or enhancements could add value to your user experience, including the missing functionalities or elements that your users could benefit from.

HOW DOES STORY MAPPING WORK?

Story mapping could start as simply as grabbing a whiteboard and some sticky notes.

You should start by outlining the problem that you are trying to solve with your product: i.e.,how does it help your users? This will allow you to set a starting point to mapping your customer's goals. It will also allow you to always keep in mind the user perspective in all interactions.

The second step is intuitive: trace your target audience's activities. You'll likely have more than one buyer persona, and different audiences expect different outcomes when interacting with your product.

Taking this into consideration, the team will be able to create a common understanding of each target audience and their point of view, to then build stories from.

Said users will engage with your product in a similar way, likely with a set or series of common activities, also known as themes. These activities will now create a backbone for the story map.
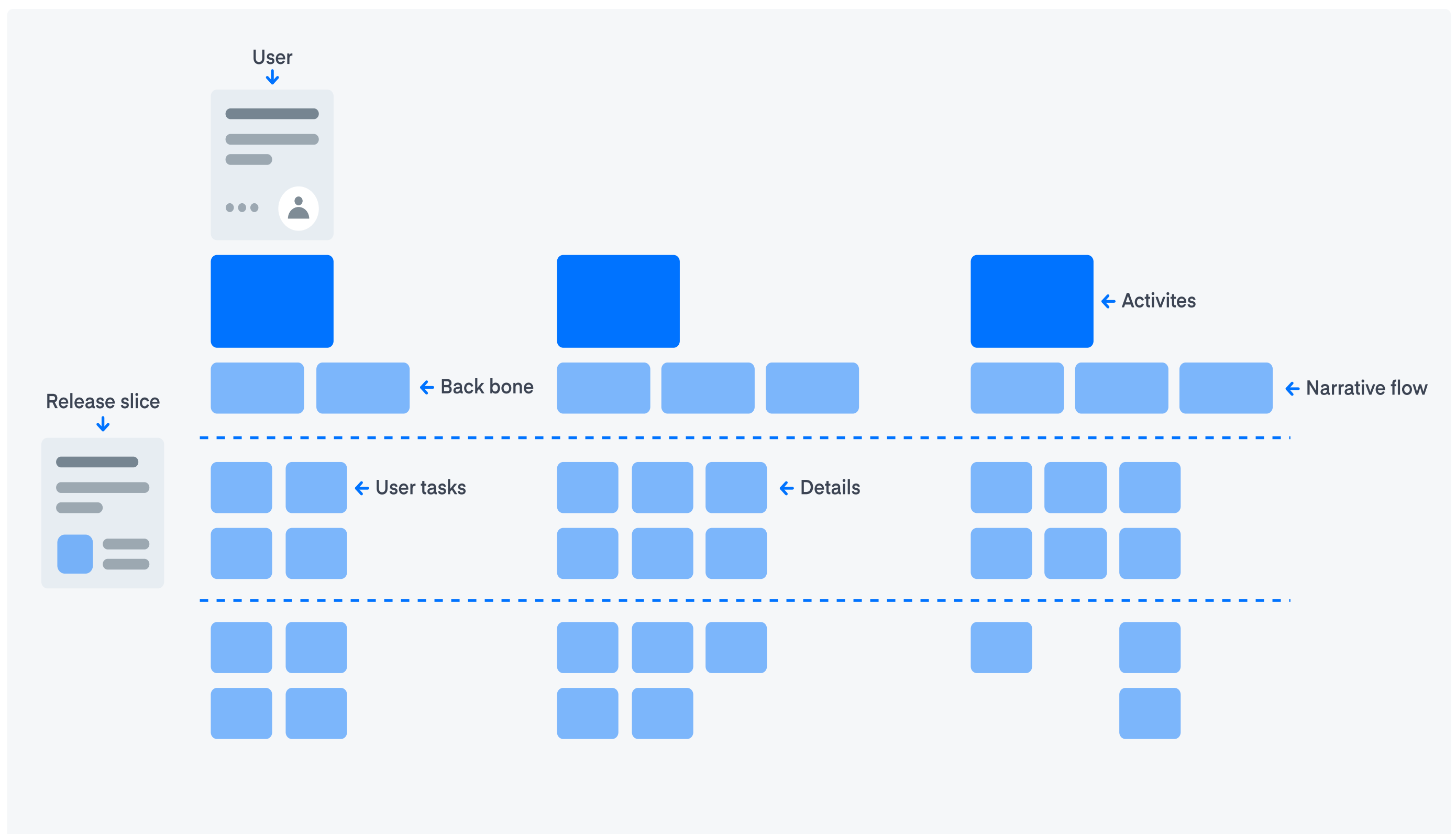
These activities will be the steps of your sequence, and you'll have to arrange them with smaller steps under each one. For example, some of your main steps could be registering as a new user, or going through the checkout flow when completing a purchase. These will create your sequence at the very top, and will be broken down into smaller user stories within each one.

Here's where it starts getting more interesting as now you have your backbone, so you'll have to start giving your skeleton some life! Your user stories will start getting mapped to your activities and different scenarios will arise as you walk in the shoes of the user. For example: How do I get rid of items in my cart?

Once you have the user stories, you'll have to prioritize them and that's when the vertical axis comes in handy. You'll simply arrange them in hierarchical order with the most important ones at the top. This can get messy when you have numerous types of users, and you'll therefore want to map separate scenarios. But the idea is to be able to agree on which stories are crucial, and which are less important when it comes to delighting your audience.

✓

Why we love it

Quick and easy to implement
Crucial for MVPs or products with limited resources.

Constant value delivery
It is user centric, thereby providing early feedback and allowing room for quick decision making.

It allows for an outside-in approach
This allows you to see the wood from the trees. The big picture allows every stakeholder to think like, and act on behalf of, the user.

Cost effective as it does not require external inputs, and can be executed in minutes. As simple as using a whiteboard.

✗

A few downsides

Information can be easily lost:
as they are mostly built on a physical board.

The whole exercise can be futile: you may build a story about the wrong user goal, meaning your story mapping is rendered useless.

Fails to consider important factors: such as complexity, or dynamic environments. It's therefore hard to establish a timelines past 6 months.

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