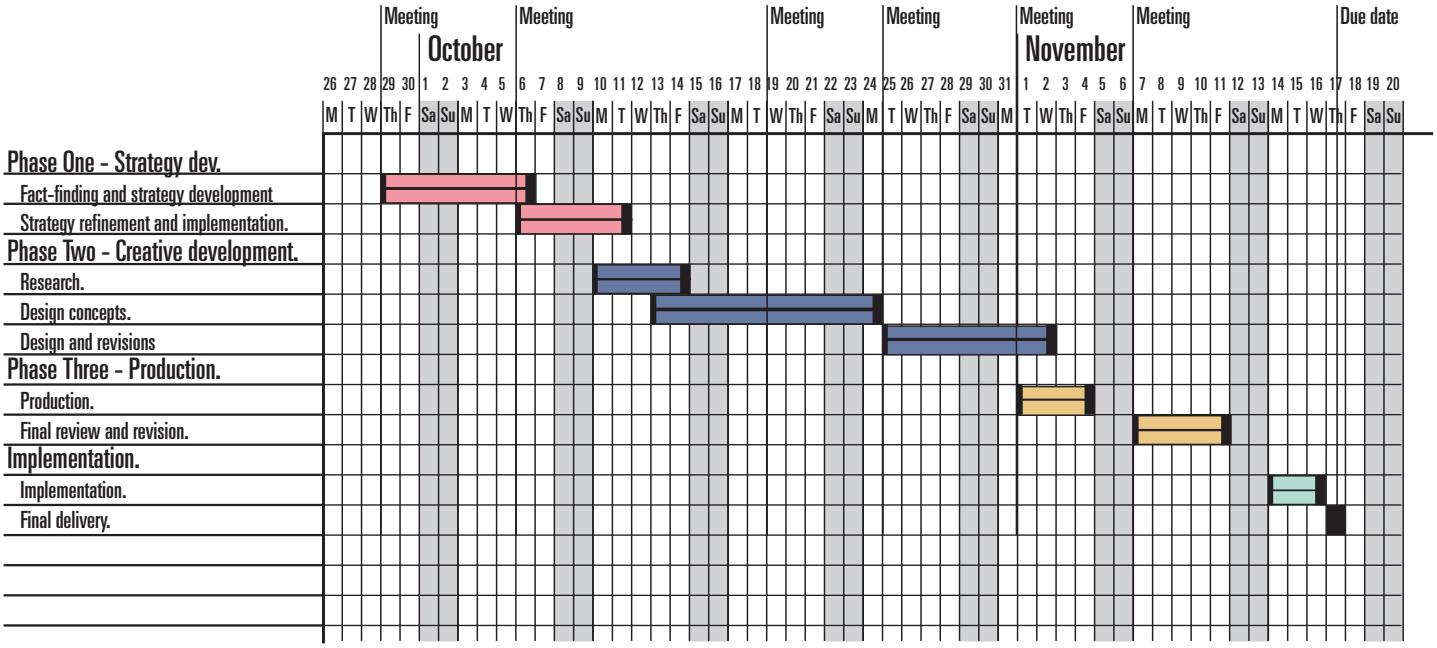
Gantt charts

A Gantt chart is a horizontal bar chart developed as a production control tool in 1917 by Henry L. Gantt, an American engineer and social scientist. Frequently used in project management, a Gantt chart provides a graphical illustration of a schedule that helps to plan, coordinate, and track specifi c tasks in a project.

Gantt charts may be simple versions created on graph paper or more complex automated versions created using project management applications such as Microsoft Project (pc) or FastTrack (mac). You can even use Excel or Illustrator.



Gantt charts give a clear illustration of project statusand are constructed with a horizontal axis representing the total time span of the project, broken down into increments (for example, days, weeks, or months) and a vertical axis representing the tasks that make up the project (for example, if the project is outfitting your computer with new software, the major tasks involved might be: conduct research, choose software, install software).

Horizontal bars of varying lengths represent the sequences, timing, and time span for each task. Using the same example, you would put "conduct research" at the top of the verticle axis and draw a bar on the graph that represents the amount of time you expect to spend on the research, and then enter the other tasks below the first one and representative bars at the points in time when you expect to undertake them. The bar spans may overlap, as, for example, you may conduct research and choose software during the same time span.

As the project progresses, secondary bars, arrowheads, or darkened bars may be added to indicate completed tasks, or the portions of tasks that have been completed. A vertical line is used to represent the report date.