THE FINISH LINE

achieve important goals

THE FREE GUIDE
v1.2

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reach your finish line

IF YOU'RE

- Starting a small business or side hustle
- Running an important initiative
- Building or creating something new

AND YOU WANT

- A clear path from idea to done
- To avoid getting stuck or overwhelmed
- To finish what you've started

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP

Bringing something important to completion is not just about hard work. It's about making good decisions, engaging the right people, and staying on course under pressure.

This guide shares methods proven for decades in big companies, translated for regular people. No jargon. No complicated systems. Just practical ways to think through what you're building and how to get there.

USING THE UNSTUCK GUIDE FROM PMEZ?

The UNSTUCK guide gives you tools to act on specific pressures in the moment. The FINISH LINE builds on the ideas from UNSTUCK and applies them to a goal or initiative that needs a path from idea to done.

how it works

The Finish Line breaks your journey into three stages. Each stage answers the questions you're actually asking.

THINKING — **you're figuring out what you want to achieve**

- what's my finish line?
- who needs to be involved and how?

PREPARING — **you're getting organized to make it happen**

- what's included and what's not?
- what are the big chunks of work?
- do I have what I need to reach the finish line?
- when does work happen?

DOING — **you're doing the work to reach your finish line**

- what could go wrong?
- am I making enough progress?
- should I change course?

how to use this guide

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- First understand the stage you're at:

  Thinking   You have an idea, and you're trying to get clear on what you're actually going to achieve.

  Preparing   You know what you want to achieve, and you're organizing to make it happen.

  Doing   You're organized and are hard at work, and you want to sustain momentum and handle what comes up.

- Then decide the questions that will help reach your finish line.

TIPS

- You could be in multiple stages at once (e.g., Preparing and Doing). That's normal.

- Answer only the questions that make sense for your situation. They don't all need answers for success.

- You may want to revisit the questions again as things progress to stay aligned.

THINKING

Figure out exactly what you want to achieve and understand who's impacted

WHEN YOU'RE STARTING OUT, TWO THINGS MATTER MOST:

What's my finish line?
Get clear on what "done" looks like

Who needs to be involved and how?
Figure out who's part of this

If you're just beginning, start here.

what's my finish line?
get clear on what done looks like

Your finish line is your end result. It's what exists when the work is complete. Not the work itself, but the outcome. It's what keeps your efforts aimed at the right target and tells you when you're done.
Examples
- A coffee shop that's open for business
- A website where people can buy my art
- A community garden with 20 plots and water access

How to define your finish line
- Picture your end result. What does it look like when you're done? What exists that doesn't exist now? Write that down in one sentence.

- Then check it against three tests:
  - ✓ Can you point to it? It's a real thing, not just an activity.
  - ✓ Is it realistic? You can actually do this with your time, money, and skills.
  - ✓ Does it have a definitive end point? You can tell when you're done.

One more thing
- Write down anything that could shape or constrain your path to getting there:
  - ✓ Budget limits
  - ✓ Time limits
  - ✓ Things you're worried about
  - ✓ Important assumptions you're making

who needs to be involved and how?
figure out who's a part of this

Not everyone connected to your finish line needs the same level of involvement. Some people need to be deeply engaged. Others just need to know what's happening. Knowing who's who lets you focus your energy where it matters most.

How to decide who needs to be involved and how
- Think broadly about everyone connected to your finish line:
  - ✓ People who will do the work
  - ✓ People affected by what you're doing
  - ✓ People who control something you need (e.g., money, space, permissions, access)
  - ✓ People with useful knowledge or experience
  - ✓ People who will have opinions whether you ask or not

- For each person, ask: "how much does this actually affect their life?"
  - ✓ <u>Directly</u> the outcome changes something real for them. They're doing the work, funding it, or living with the result.
  - ✓ <u>Indirectly</u> they're touched by it but not changed by it. They can help or advise but the outcome isn't really theirs.
  - ✓ <u>Not really</u> they have opinions but no real stake.

- Remember: closeness and volume don't equal impact. Someone can care deeply and still not be directly affected.

- Decide how to engage them
  - ✓ **Directly affected** actively seek their input, keep them informed, and seriously weigh what they say. These are your key players.
  - ✓ **Indirectly affected** engage them when you need their help or knowledge. Value their input but don't let it drive decisions.
  - ✓ **Not really affected** listen respectfully, then move on.

One more thing
For anyone who is noisy or draining, listen respectfully and move on, regardless of how affected they are. Protect your energy.

PREPARING

Get organized to make it happen

TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET TO THE FINISH LINE, TWO THINGS MATTER MOST

What's included and what's not?
Define a scope so you don't drift

What are the big chunks of work?
Break the finish line into pieces you can tackle

DEPENDING ON YOUR SITUATION, TWO MORE QUESTIONS MAY ALSO HELP

Do I have what I need to reach the finish line?
Identify resource needs and gaps

When does work happen?
Lay out a timeline

Answer the questions that matter most for your situation.

what's included and what's not?
define a scope so you don't drift

Without clear boundaries, your finish line will shift. New ideas creep in, people add expectations, and before you know it you're working on something bigger than what you set out to do. Setting boundaries keeps you focused and gives you a way to say "that's not part of this" without guilt.

How to set your scope

- List everything that could be part of reaching your finish line
  - ✓ What you've promised
  - ✓ What others expect
  - ✓ What you expect of yourself
  - ✓ What may be needed behind the scenes

- Decide what is essential. If an item meets any of the tests below, it's part of the scope
  - ✓ <u>Health, safety, or legal</u> it must be done to keep people safe or meet basic responsibilities
  - ✓ <u>Basic operations</u>   it's the minimum needed to make your finish line work or be worthwhile
  - ✓ <u>Promises made</u>   you've explicitly committed to it and someone is counting on you

- For the other items, pick a move
  - ✓ **Skip** it's nice to have but not worth the effort right now
  - ✓ **Simplify** it's worth doing but in a smaller or easier form
  - ✓ **Postpone** it matters but it can wait for another time

One more thing
Even after you've set boundaries, new ideas and requests will show up. When they do, run them through the same tests before letting them in. The Doing stage covers how to handle these changes deliberately.

what are the big chunks of work?
break the finish line into pieces you can tackle

Breaking your finish line into doable chunks helps you identify what needs to happen, organize the work, and make progress on pieces rather than being overwhelmed by the whole endeavor.   Not every item in your scope needs to be broken into chunks, just the things that are substantial or unclear.

How to identify chunks
- Look at each item in your scope and ask:
  - ✓ Does this seem really big or complicated?
  - ✓ Does this have different parts, phases, or versions?
  - ✓ Does this have different aspects that should be handled separately?

- For anything where the answer is yes, break it into chunks using these prompts:
  - ✓ What will exist when this item or chunk is finished?
  - ✓ What parts would someone point to and say "that's done"?
  - ✓ What would each person take if three people divided this work?
  - ✓ What has to happen before anything else can start?

- Check each chunk, by asking:
  - ✓ Can you picture completing it? If not, it's still too big. Break it down further.
  - ✓ Is it unfamiliar or new to you? If so, talk to someone with experience or do some research. There may be chunks you're missing because you don't yet know the territory.
  - ✓ Is the chunk really a task? If so, you've gone into too much detail.

- Organize the chunks for doing the work
  - ✓ Group any chunks that are related or naturally go together
  - ✓ Note which chunks depend on other chunks being done first
  - ✓ If other people are involved, think about who is the natural fit for each chunk

do I have what I need?
Identify resource needs and close gaps

Knowing what you need ahead of time prevents last-minute scrambling and helps you see early whether your finish line is realistic. If you have gaps, better to know now when you can still close them.

How to be ready with what you need
- Look at each item in scope and each chunk and ask: "what will I need to complete this?" Think across these categories:
  - ✓ <u>People</u>   someone's time, effort, or expertise
  - ✓ <u>Skills or knowledge</u>   abilities you or others need to do the work
  - ✓ <u>Money</u>   funding, savings, or income to cover costs
  - ✓ <u>Tools or materials</u>   physical or digital things required
  - ✓ <u>Access</u>   space, permissions, accounts, or connections

- For each resource, ask: "do I have this ready to go?"   If not, you have a gap. For any gap, pick a closing move:
  - ✓ **Get it**   acquire or arrange what's missing
  - ✓ **Borrow it**   find someone who has it and can share
  - ✓ **Substitute it**   find something else that works well enough
  - ✓ **Recruit help**   bring someone in who has what you need
  - ✓ **Shrink things**   reduce your scope to fit what you actually have

One more thing
The most common gap isn't money or tools; it's people. Someone you're counting on may not have the time, may not follow through, or may not have the skills you assumed. If a chunk depends heavily on one person, ask yourself what happens if they can't deliver. Having a backup plan for your key people isn't pessimism, it's readiness.

when does work happen?
lay out a rough timeline

A timeline helps you see whether your finish line is realistic given the time you have. It doesn't need to be detailed or precise. It just needs to show what happens roughly when, so you can spot problems before they become surprises.

How to build your timeline
- Using the items from your scope and any chunks you identified, ask three questions:
  - ✓ What needs to happen to create this item or chunk?   These are your tasks.
  - ✓ Roughly, when does work on the item or chunk start and end?
  - ✓ Who's doing it?

- Put the items and chunks in order by start date. Then check
  - ✓ Does the order make sense?
  - ✓ Are the dates realistic given everything else in your life?
  - ✓ Is anyone overloaded?

- If the timing isn't working, you have three options:
  - ✓ **Adjust the timing** move things around to create a sequence that works
  - ✓ **Reduce the scope**   go back to your scope and cut or postpone something
  - ✓ **Get more help**   bring in another person or resource to share the load

One more thing
Your timeline will change as work progresses. That's expected and fine. The point isn't to create a perfect schedule. It's to have a rough map that shows you where you're headed and whether you're falling behind.

DOING

Do the work and sustain momentum

WHEN YOU'RE WORKING HARD TOWARDS THE FINISH LINE, THREE QUESTIONS HELP YOU STAY ON COURSE:

What could go wrong?
Spot and prevent trouble before it derails you

Am I making enough progress?
Check in and adjust as needed

Should I change course?
Decide whether to shift or not

Answer these questions as needed.

what could go wrong?
spot and prevent trouble

When you're working toward something important, worries will show up. The difference between a worry and a risk is what you do with it. A worry sits in your head and drains you. A risk is something you've named, sized up, and decided how to handle. This question turns your worries into risks.

How to manage risks

- Write down the concerns you have about reaching your finish line that you can't control. These are risks.

- For each risk, ask:
  - ✓ How likely is it to happen? Base it on facts, not feelings.
  - ✓ If it happens, how bad is the impact on your finish line?

- For risks that are likely to happen or would cause trouble to the finish line, take one or both of the actions below:
  - ✓ **Prevent** find ways to reduce the chances they happen.
  - ✓ **Prepare** decide now how you'll adjust if it does.

- For risks that are unlikely and low-impact, let them go. Not every worry deserves your energy.

One more thing

Risks change as work progresses. Some fade. Others grow. New ones appear that you couldn't have foreseen. Make it a habit to revisit your risks when you check progress. Ask yourself: is anything new keeping me up at night? If so, name it, size it up, and decide what to do.

am I making enough progress?
check-in and adjust as needed

When you're deep in the work, it's easy to lose perspective. You might be further along than you think, or you might be falling behind without realizing it. Regular check-ins put you back in control so you can adjust deliberately instead of reacting.

How to check-in and adjust

- Decide on a rhythm on when to take stock. It doesn't need to be rigid.
  - ✓ Weekly for fast-moving work
  - ✓ Monthly for longer timelines
  - ✓ After an item or chunk completes
  - ✓ When a disruption occurs

- Understand your progress by asking:
  - ✓ What's done? Look at your chunks and scope. What can you point to and say "that's finished"?
  - ✓ What's taking longer or proving harder than expected?
  - ✓ What should have started by now but hasn't?
  - ✓ Is the finish line the same, or has it shifted?

- For anything that's delayed or stuck, pick a reset move:
  - ✓ **Problem-solve** find a way to catch up or get past the obstacle
  - ✓ **Adapt** adjust your timeline or scope to reflect reality
  - ✓ **Let it go** if it's minor and isn't blocking anything else, move on

- Revisit any risks you've identified and ask:
  - ✓ Are any becoming more likely or more serious?
  - ✓ Have new worries appeared that should be named as risks?
  - ✓ Do you need to take action on something you've been watching?

should I change course?
decide whether to shift or not

Things will come up that could change your finish line, your scope, or your timeline. A new opportunity. An unexpected setback. Someone's great idea. Feedback you weren't expecting. Without a clear way to decide, you'll either drift into changes you didn't intend or resist changes you should make.

How to handle changes

- When a change comes up, name it clearly.

- Assess the change by asking:
  - ✓ Does this have to happen? Is it driven by something real, like a new constraint, a genuine problem, a critical opportunity, or is it just a new idea that sounds appealing?
  - ✓ Can it <u>fit</u>? If you make this change, can your current timeline, resources, and scope absorb it?

- If the change has to happen and fits, take note where it goes in the scope and chunks.

- If the change doesn't have to happen, stay the course. Don't let it distract you.

- If the change has to happen but doesn't fit, something else has to give. Before you take on the change, decide what you'll adjust:
  - ✓ Your **timeline** can you extend it?
  - ✓ Your **resources** can you get more help?
  - ✓ Your **scope** can you cut or postpone something else to make room?

let PMEZ help

UNSTUCK GUIDE

If you're facing everyday pressures like hard decisions, too many demands, or worries that won't quit, the UNSTUCK guide gives you practical tools to act on them right now. Free at PMEZ.org

FINISH LINE CONSULTATION

4-week one-on-one engagement

You'll leave with a clear finish line, a workable plan to reach it, and momentum locked-in to see it through, applied directly to your initiative.

GROUP WORKSHOP

Bring the FINISH LINE to your team. Hands-on sessions with participants working through the questions with their own real goals.

TALK

Engaging talks on finishing what matters, handling pressure, and making steady progress. Available for conferences, companies, and community events.

Ready to reach your FINISH LINE?

Contact us at info@pmez.org or visit PMEZ.org