Project management 101 *by Zavanak*

15. PLANNING

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15.3 Milestones, tasks and gateways

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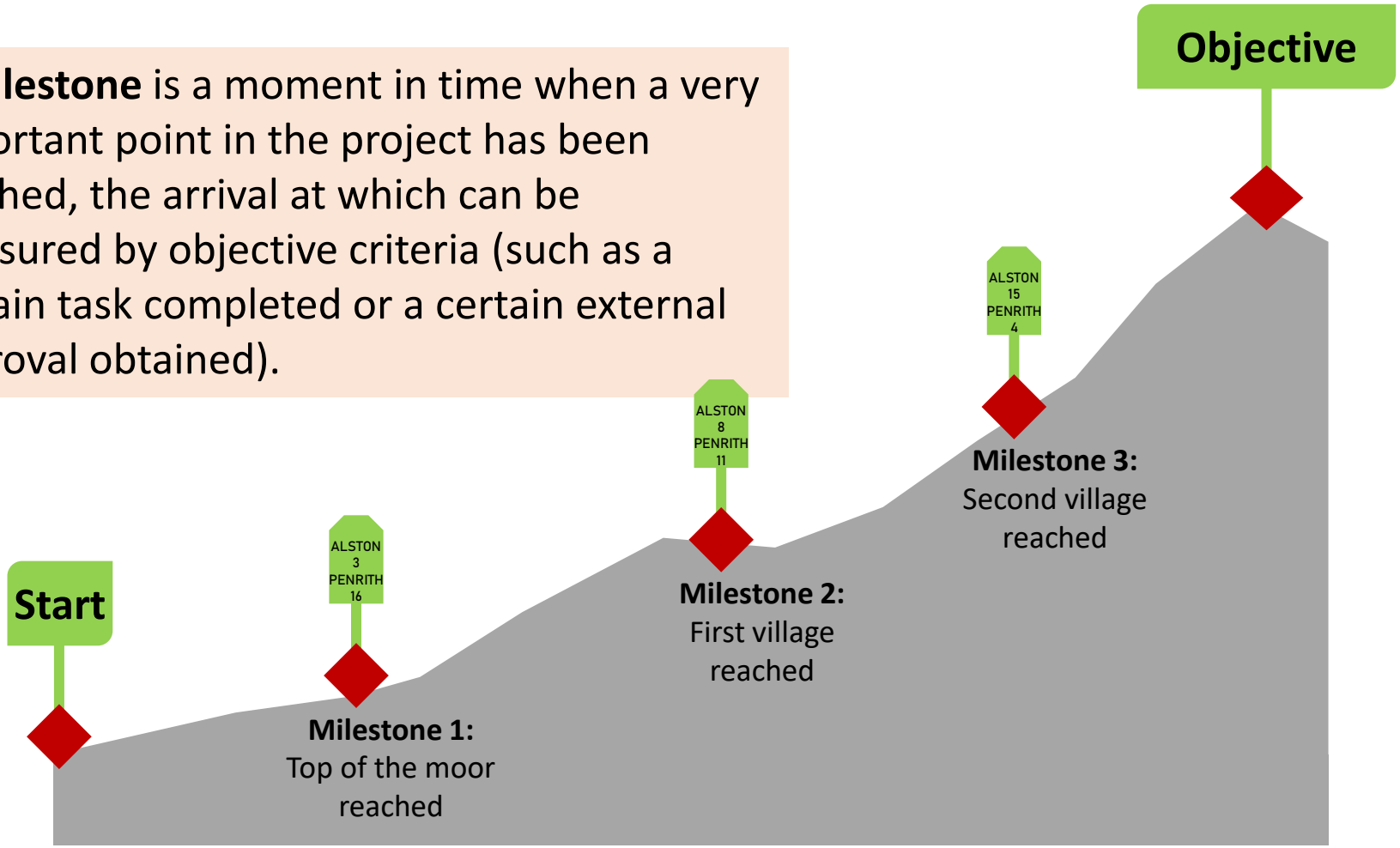
Plotting milestones

A **milestone** is a moment in time when a very important point in the project has been reached, the arrival at which can be measured by objective criteria (such as a certain task completed or a certain external approval obtained).



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Milestone planning

Focus on accomplishments, not merely on activity.
Identify milestones during the definition and planning phases.

Milestones provide:

- clear decision point on whether a strand of work can proceed, pause, be re-worked or be abandoned
- **a motivating focus for effort that is stronger that just getting tasks done**
- a focus for communications

Milestones must be:

- simple to describe and easy to measure
- **free of arcane jargon as far as possible**
- labelled in a way that implies completion (e.g. 'testing complete')
- **logically linked with preceding tasks and following activities**
- kept to a sensibly small number (fewer than 20 on a big project, but parts of a big project can have their own 'mini-milestones')

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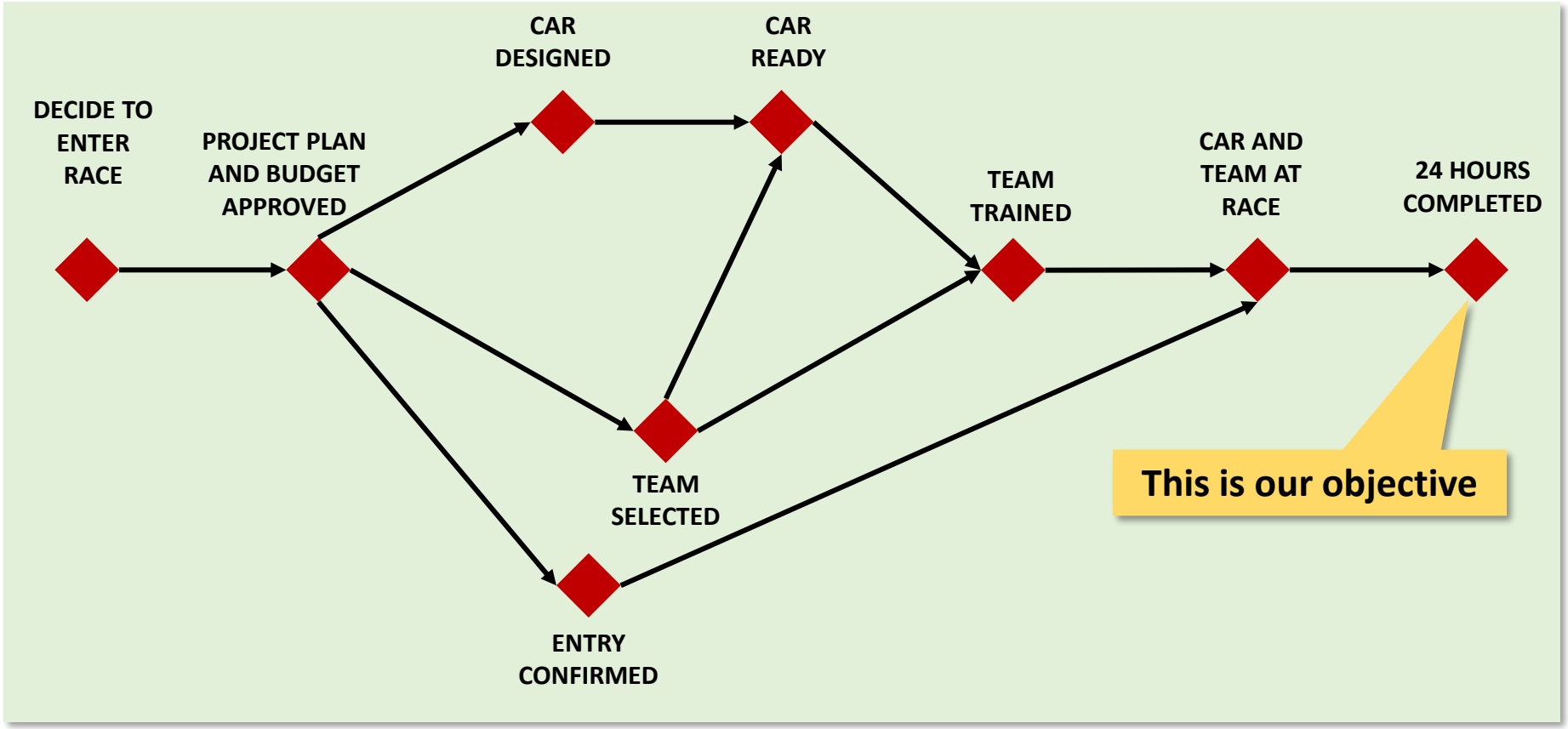
Simple milestone plan

24 hour pedal car race



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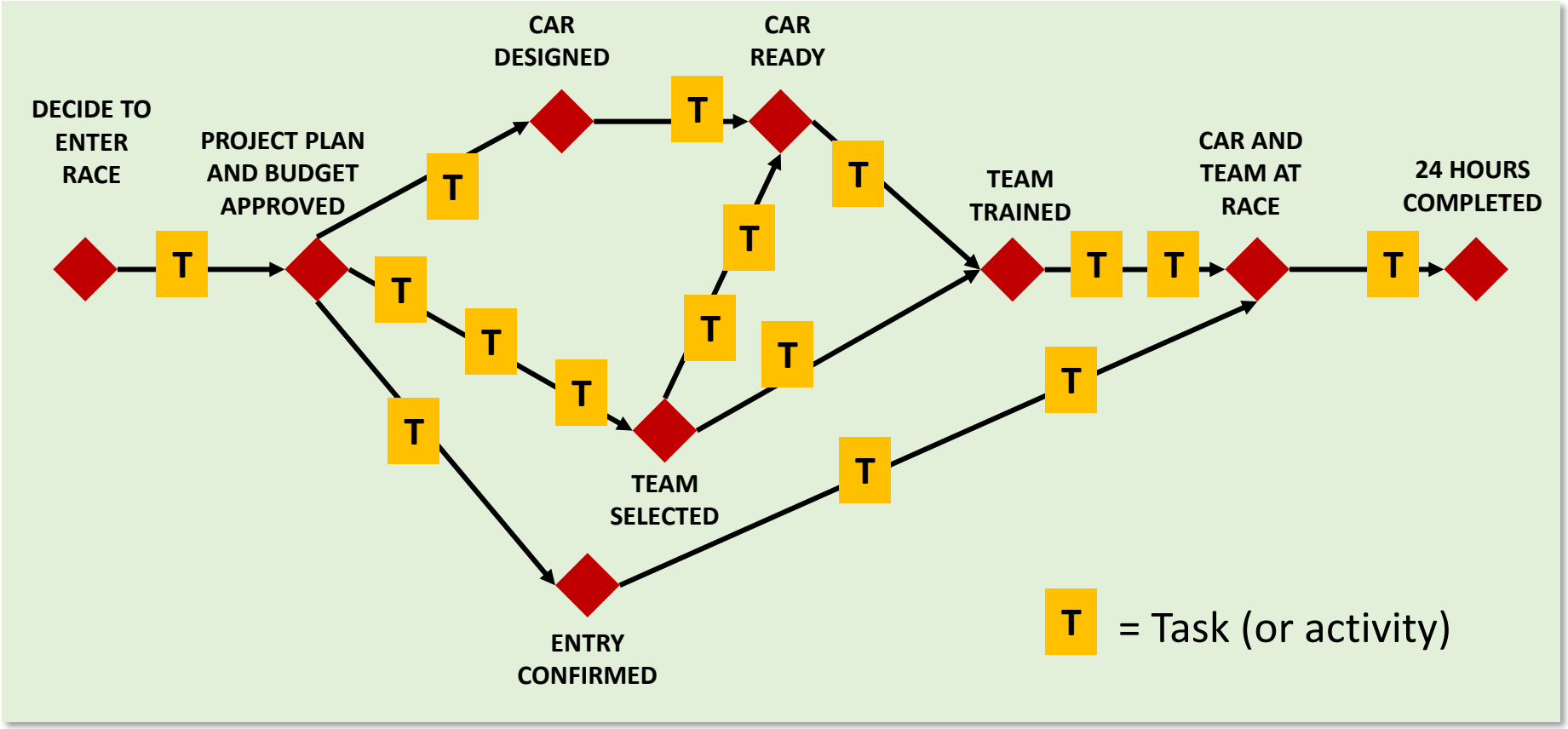
Task network



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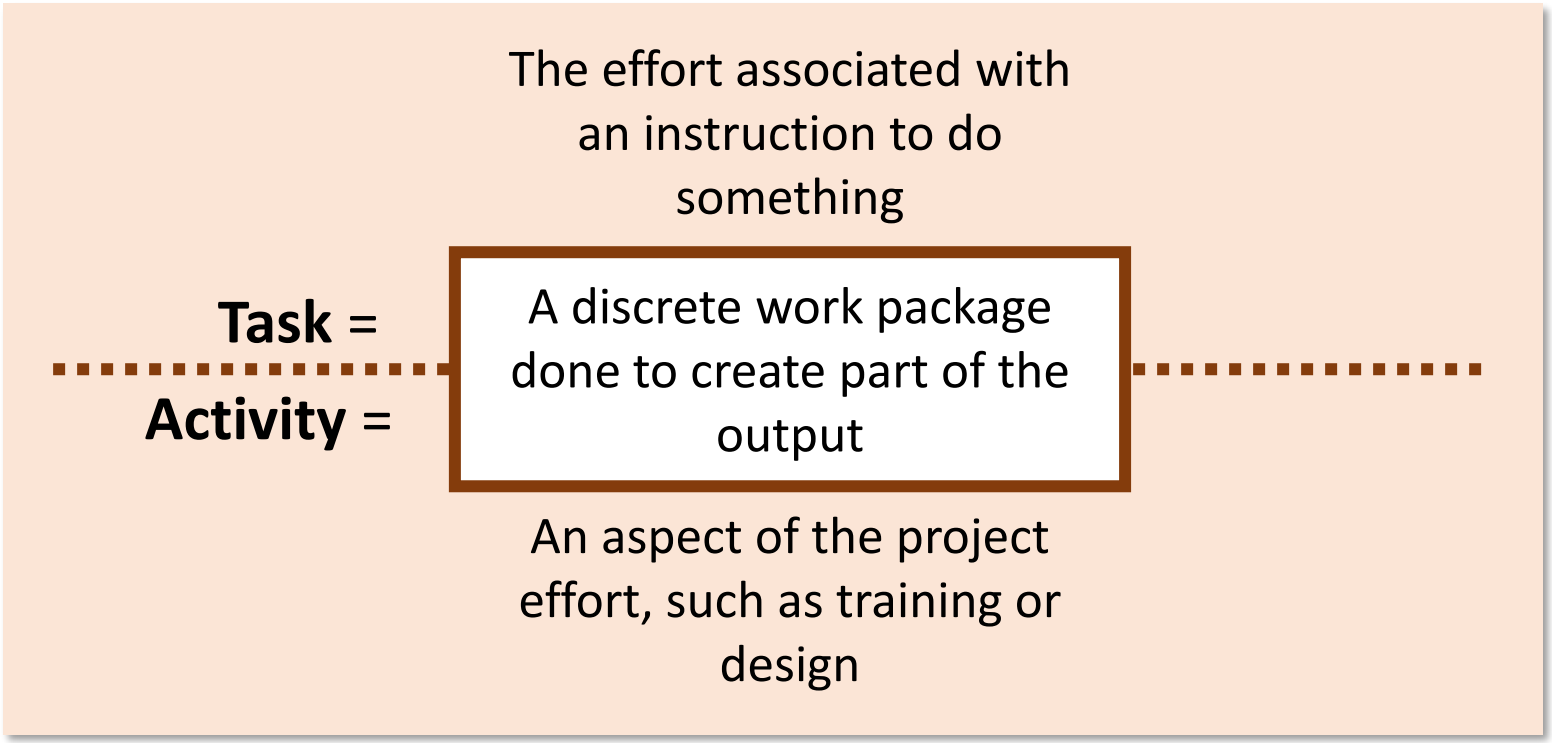
‘Task’ or ‘activity’?



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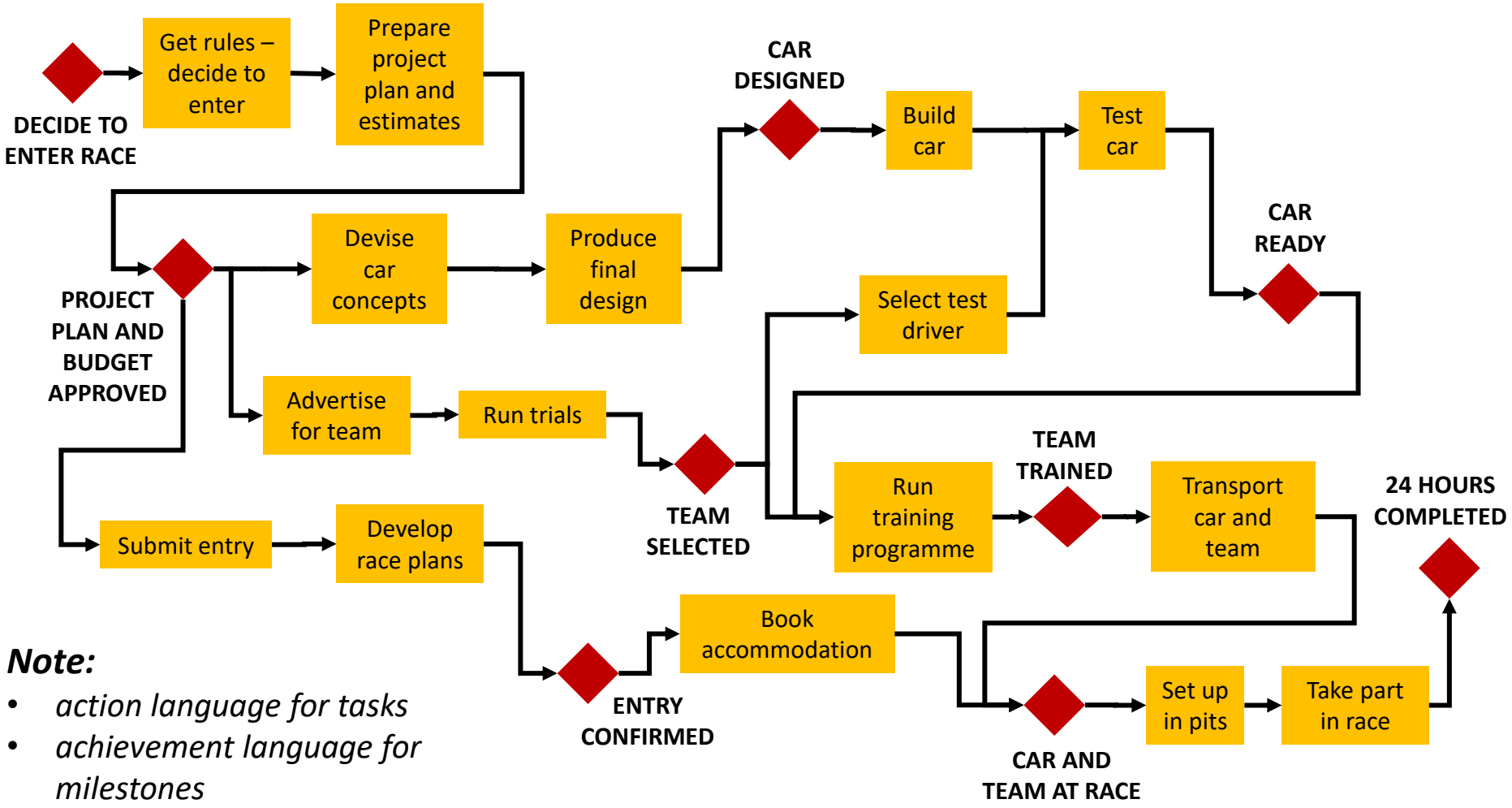
Task network



Note:

- *action language for tasks*
- *achievement language for milestones*

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Task rules

- Tasks must link together logically; the flow and of tasks must make sense.
- **Time flows from left to right.**
- The inter-dependence of tasks is explicitly shown.
- **A task can only begin when clear conditions are met (input tasks are finished, or have reached a point where new task can start).**
- Arrows between tasks can overlap, but for clarity the diagram should try to avoid this.

- **Each task should have a unique identifier (possibly the full or partial WBS code).**
- Looping back through a task is not allowed.
- **It often helps to have a distinct START node and FINISH node, each with a duration of zero.**
- A change of conditions will require modifying or re-designing the network (e.g. a requirement to re-do work of unacceptable quality)

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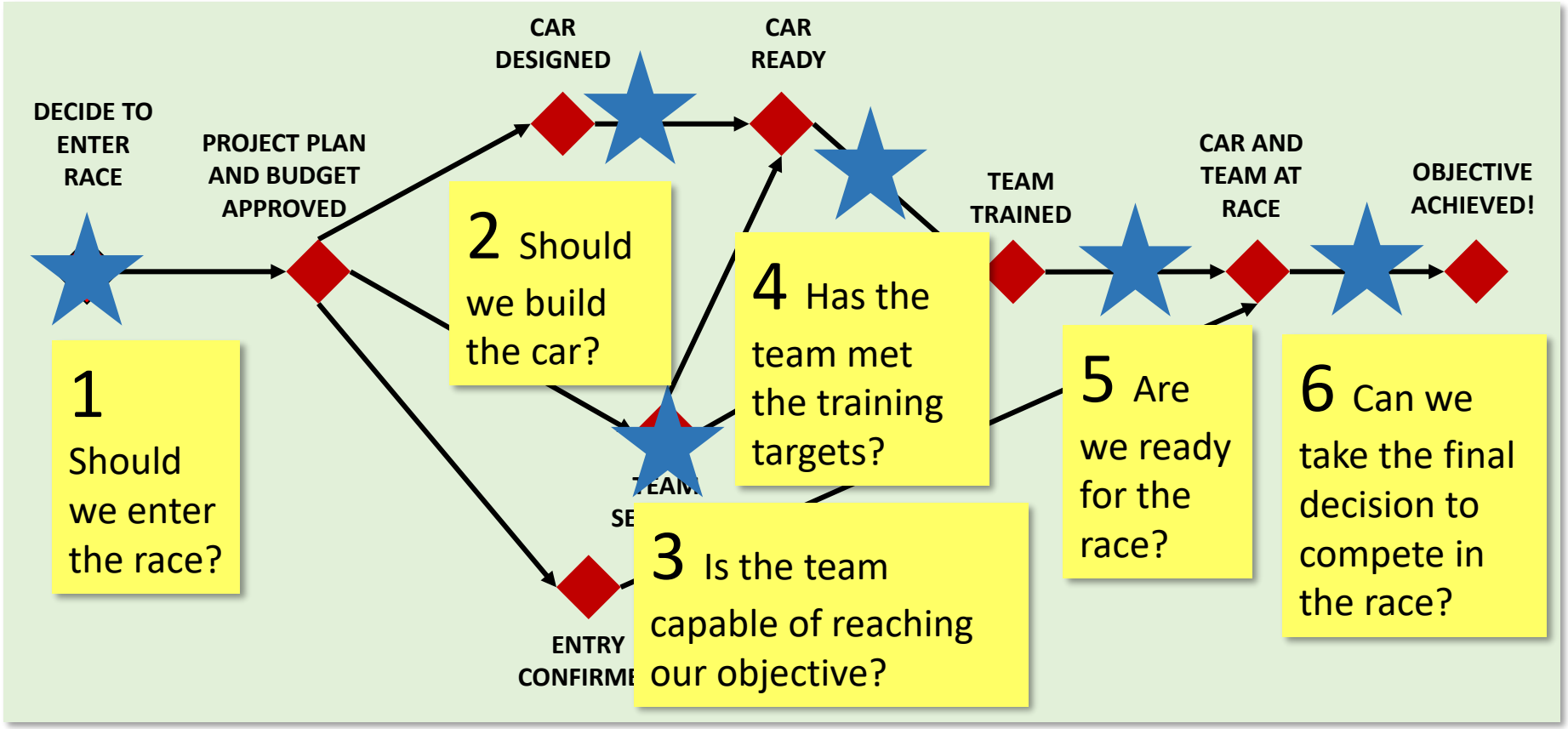
Gateways: key approval points



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Gateways

Gateway	Key question	Inputs to the decision
1	**Should we enter the race?**	Race rules, college team proposal, outline project plan, outline budget, organisation chart, college attitude
2	**Should we build the car?**	Race rules, car designs, budget, construction facilities
3	**Is the team capable of achieving our objective?**	Team details, performance results from trials
4	**Has the team met the training targets?**	Performance results, team all available on race day
5	**Are we all set for the race?**	Car status, team status, arrangements for being at the race, college support confirmed
6	**Can we take the final decision to compete in the race?**	Car ready, pit crew ready, drivers ready

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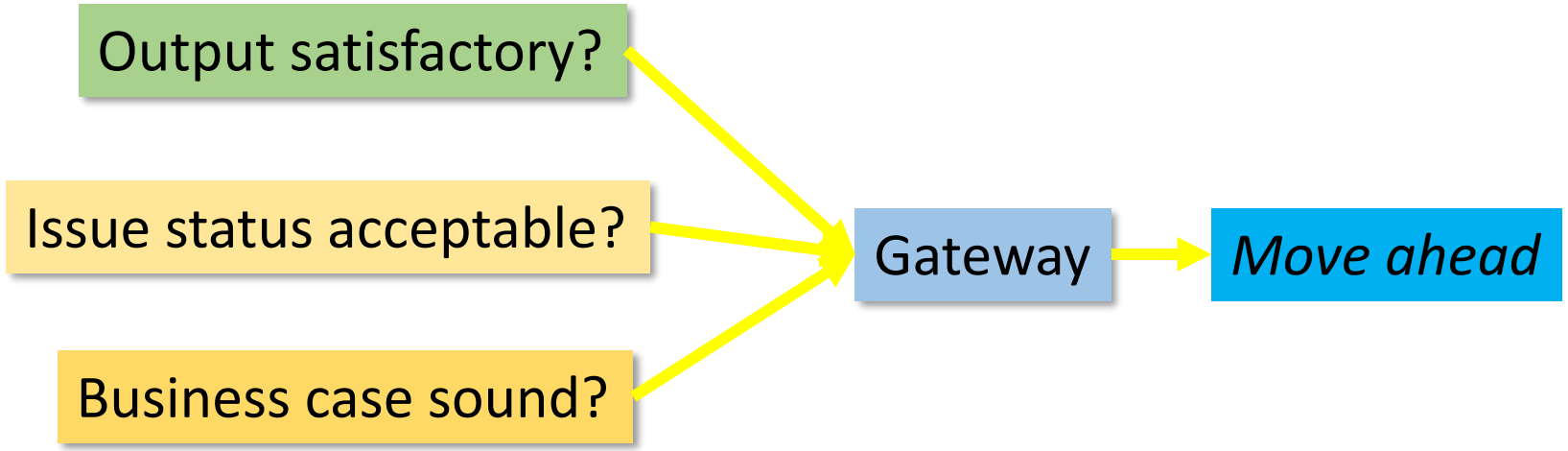
Getting through the gateway



No signature, no progress

Need rigour but flexibility at a gateway

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