



# Shape Up v 1.8, 2019 edition

## Stop Running in Circles and Ship Work that Matters

by Ryan Singer

Start reading →

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### Foreword by Jason Fried

### Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

- [Growing pains](#)
- [Six-week cycles](#)
- [Shaping the work](#)
- [Making teams responsible](#)
- [Targeting risk](#)
- [How this book is organized](#)

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## Part 1: Shaping

CHAPTER 2

### Principles of Shaping

- [Wireframes are too concrete](#)
- [Words are too abstract](#)
- [Case study: The Dot Grid Calendar](#)
- [Property 1: It's rough](#)
- [Property 2: It's solved](#)

Property 3: It's bounaea

Who shapes

Two tracks

Steps to shaping

CHAPTER 3

## **Set Boundaries**

Setting the appetite

Fixed time, variable scope

"Good" is relative

Responding to raw ideas

Narrow down the problem

Case study: Defining "calendar"

Watch out for grab-bags

Boundaries in place

CHAPTER 4

## **Find the Elements**

Move at the right speed

Breadboarding

Fat marker sketches

Elements are the output

Room for designers

Not deliverable yet

No conveyor belt

CHAPTER 5

## **Risks and Rabbit Holes**

Different categories of risk

Look for rabbit holes

Case study: Patching a hole

Declare out of bounds

Cut back

Present to technical experts

De-risked and ready to write up

CHAPTER 6

## **Write the Pitch**

Ingredient 1. Problem

Ingredient 2. Appetite

Ingredient 3. Solution

Help them see it

Embedded sketches

Annotated fat marker sketches

Ingredient 4. Rabbit Holes

Ingredient 5. No Gos

Examples

Ready to present

How we do it in Basecamp

## Part 2: Betting

### CHAPTER 7

#### **Bets, Not Backlogs**

*No backlogs*

*A few potential bets*

*Decentralized lists*

*Important ideas come back*

### CHAPTER 8

#### **The Betting Table**

*Six-week cycles*

*Cool-down*

*Team and project size*

*The betting table*

*The meaning of a bet*

*Uninterrupted time*

*The circuit breaker*

*What about bugs?*

*Keep the slate clean*

### CHAPTER 9

#### **Place Your Bets**

*Look where you are*

*Existing products*

*New products*

*R&D mode*

*Production mode*

*Cleanup mode*

*Examples*

*Questions to ask*

*Does the problem matter?*

*Is the appetite right?*

*Is the solution attractive?*

*Is this the right time?*

*Are the right people available?*

*Post the kick-off message*

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## Part 3: Building

### CHAPTER 10

#### **Hand Over Responsibility**

*Assign projects, not tasks*

*Done means deployed*

*Getting oriented*

*Imagined vs discovered tasks*

### CHAPTER 11

#### **Get One Piece Done**

*Integrate one slice*

Case study: Clients in projects  
Programmers don't need to wait

Affordances before pixel-perfect screens  
Program just enough for the next step  
Start in the middle

#### CHAPTER 12

### **Map the Scopes**

Organize by structure, not by person  
The scope map  
The language of the project  
Case study: Message drafts  
Discovering scopes  
How to know if the scopes are right  
Layer cakes  
Icebergs  
Chowder  
Mark nice-to-haves with ~

#### CHAPTER 13

### **Show Progress**

The tasks that aren't there  
Estimates don't show uncertainty  
Work is like a hill  
Scopes on the hill  
Status without asking  
Nobody says "I don't know"  
Prompts to refactor the scopes  
Build your way uphill  
Solve in the right sequence

#### CHAPTER 14

### **Decide When to Stop**

Compare to baseline  
Limits motivate trade-offs  
Scope grows like grass  
Cutting scope isn't lowering quality  
Scope hammering  
QA is for the edges  
When to extend a project

#### CHAPTER 15

### **Move On**

Let the storm pass  
Stay debt-free  
Feedback needs to be shaped

### **Conclusion**

Key concepts  
Get in touch

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# Appendices

## **How to Implement Shape Up in Basecamp**

*[A Basecamp Team for shaping](#)*

*[Basecamp Projects for cycle projects](#)*

*[To-Do Lists for scopes](#)*

*[Track scopes on the Hill Chart](#)*

## **Adjust to Your Size**

*[Basic truths vs. specific practices](#)*

*[Small enough to wing it](#)*

*[Big enough to specialize](#)*

## **How to Begin to Shape Up**

*[Option A: One six-week experiment](#)*

*[Option B: Start with shaping](#)*

*[Option C: Start with cycles](#)*

*[Fix shipping first](#)*

*[Focus on the end result](#)*

## **Glossary**

## **About the Author**