Defining Tasks

Now that you have created your project file, the next step in developing a project plan is to create a list of all the tasks that must be completed to meet your goals. A *task* is a specific activity that must be completed to achieve the project goals. Most tasks have an identifiable start and end, require people or equipment to complete them, and are specific enough that their progression and their final result can be measured. Considering that tasks provide the foundation for the rest of your project plan and the basis for tracking the progress of your project, it is important that the task list be detailed and clear.

As you form your task list, you might want to include phases and milestones. A *phase* is a group of related tasks that completes a major step. A *milestone* is a task that requires no actual work and serves as a check point to help track the progress of important events in a project.

There are several ways to create a task list. For example, you can list all the tasks first, and then group the tasks into phases, or you can list all the major phases first, and then enter the tasks and milestones. The method you choose is dependent on the size of the project. For example, listing all the tasks first works best for smaller projects that involve only one department.