Applying Constraints

On occasion, you may want a task to begin or end on a specific date, despite how dates of other tasks may change. For example, you may want the date of a consultation with the customer to discuss the project's progress to remain fixed, whether the tasks are being completed late or early. A *constraint* is a restriction that you place on a task's start or finish date. There are several types of constraints that you can place on a task, as described in **Table 2-2**. By default all Microsoft Project tasks have the As Soon As Possible constraint applied to them.

Constraint	Description
As Soon As Possible (ASAP)	Task starts as soon as links and other factors in the schedule allow.
As Late as Possible (ALAP)	Task starts as late as possible, without delaying the project finish date.
Start No Earlier Than (SNET)	Task starts on or after the date you specify.
Finish No Earlier Than (FNET)	Task finishes on or after the date you specify.
Start No Later Than (SNLT)	Task starts on or before the date you specify.
Finish No Later Than (FNLT)	Task finishes on or before the date you specify.
Must Start On (MSO)	Task starts on the date you specify.
Must Finish On (MFO)	Task finishes on the date you specify.

***Table 2-2:** The Constraint Types*

Constraint types are either flexible or inflexible. Flexible constraints are constraints that let Microsoft Project calculate the start and finish dates for the task. For example, if you apply the *As Soon As Possible* constraint or the *As Late As Possible* constraint, Microsoft Project will calculate the earliest or latest possible start and finish dates for the task. These choices allow for automatic rescheduling if another task in the schedule changes.

Another example of a flexible constraint is the *Finish No Later Than* constraint that requires you to enter a date in the date column. For example, if you are renovating a house and the owners are moving in on August 31, 1998, the task can be finished before August 31, 1998, but no later than August 31, 1998. The *Finish No Later Than* constraint has some flexibility because the job can finish before that date, but cannot finish after