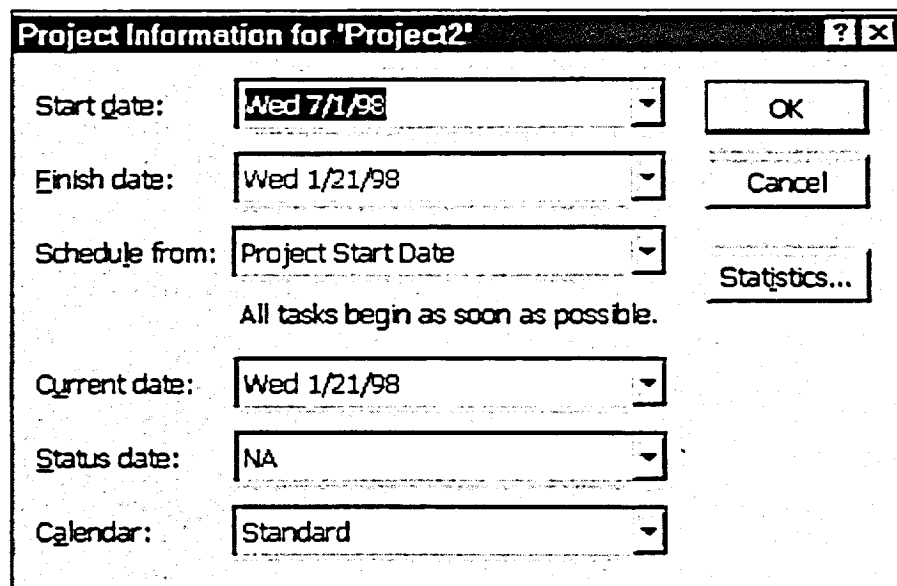


Starting a Project Plan

Once you have set the project goals, defined the scope, determined the resources required and any scheduling factors, you're ready to start your project plan. Before you can start a project plan in Microsoft Project, you need to create a new project file. A *project file* is the location where all the information related to your project is entered, calculated, edited and stored. Once you have created a project file, you then enter the project details such as the project goals and its scope. After you enter this information, it's a good idea to name and save the new project file.

Creating a New Project File

Microsoft Project automatically creates a schedule based on the information you enter using a scheduling *algorithm*. An algorithm is a mathematical or logical equation that solves a complex problem by breaking down the problem into simple steps. For this reason, you need to provide Microsoft Project with a reference point. Normally, this reference point is the project *start date*. The start date is the date on which you want the project to begin. You enter a start date in the Project Information dialog box, shown in **Figure 1-6**, when you want Microsoft Project to schedule tasks forward from this date. As you enter tasks, Microsoft Project will automatically calculate the finish date.



The screenshot shows the 'Project Information for 'Project2'' dialog box. It contains several fields and buttons:

- Start date:** Wed 7/1/98
- Finish date:** Wed 1/21/98
- Schedule from:** Project Start Date
- Current date:** Wed 1/21/98
- Status date:** NA
- Calendar:** Standard

Buttons on the right include OK, Cancel, and Statistics... Below the 'Schedule from' dropdown, the text 'All tasks begin as soon as possible.' is displayed.

Figure 1-6: The Project Information Dialog Box