Entering Tasks and Durations

Once you have identified your tasks, phases and milestones, you enter them into your project plan. As you enter tasks, Microsoft Project automatically schedules the tasks, calculates the task start and finish dates, and the project finish date. The length of time required to complete a task is referred to as the task *duration*. By default, a task duration does not include weekends and holidays. For example, a five day task scheduled to begin on Wednesday will occur on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Monday and Tuesday. If you want a task duration to include weekends and holidays, you specify an *elapsed duration*. For example, a five day task scheduled to begin on Wednesday, will occur on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

By default Microsoft Project enters a task duration of one day; however, durations can be entered in minutes, hours, or weeks. Since a milestone is a task that requires no actual work, its duration is entered as zero days. It is important to note that, until the entire plan is built, the project and task schedules may not be accurate. **Figure 1-9** displays tasks and durations.

	Task Name	Duration
1	Design	1 wk
2	Chapter 1	5 days
3	Chapter 2	3 days
4	Chapter 3	7 days
5	Chapter 4	3 days
6	Chapter 5	5 days
7	Table of Contents	3 hrs
8	Index	3 days
9	Edit	1 wk
10	End Manual	0 days

Figure 1-9: A Gantt Chart View displaying Tasks and Durations

There are two ways to enter task information. One way is to move to a field, enter the information, move to the next field, and repeat the process as needed. You can simplify this process by selecting several adjacent fields, referred to as a range. After typing the information in a field within the range, pressing TAB enters the information into the field and automatically selects the next field in the range.