

7 Steps to Writing Business Use Cases



For Each Use Case:

1) Identify the Actors

Actor: Someone or something that interacts with, or uses, the system to achieve a desired goal

An actor may be:

- A user of the system. Describe the user by their role
- An individual who is not a user (customer, client, etc)
- The System under Discussion (SuD). Describe it as “the system”
- Another system (external entity)

2) Identify the Goal

Goal: The aim, or purpose – Goals summarize system functionality in terms of use from a business perspective

Identify the Goal:

- From the high-level scenario
- By brainstorming
- By asking “What does this Actor want to do?”

3) Define the Pre-Conditions

Pre-Condition: Something that must happen before the Use Case can start; something that must be in place before the Use Case can start

Identify Pre-Conditions by asking:

- “What must be in place for the Use Case to begin?”
- “How do you know you need to do this?”

4) Define the Post-Conditions

Post-Conditions: The result, or successful outcome of the Use Case

Identify the Post-Conditions by asking:

- “What is the successful result of this process or Use Case?”

5) Describe the Main Flow

Main Flow:

- Also known as Primary Scenario
- A single thread of events
- The simplest sequence – everything goes right
- Ideally, no branching – make a note of relevant variations
- Starts with pre-conditions and ends with post conditions

Describe the Main Flow by asking:

- “What must happen to achieve the goal / outcome?”
- “What does the actor need to do next?”
- “What might happen next?”
- “What do you need to do to get from the trigger to the outcome?”

6) Describe the Exceptions

Exceptions:

- Created to describe the failure situations
- Things that may go wrong in the Use Case

Discover exceptions by asking:

- “What could go wrong?”

7) Describe the Alternate Flows

Alternate Flows:

- Created to describe the variations to the Main Flow
- Results in successful outcome
- Also referred to as scenarios
- Listen for “sometimes”, “maybe”, and “it depends”

Discover alternate flows by asking:

- “What might affect this Use Case?”