

# Using a Hammock Task in Microsoft Project

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(This is the first part of the Hammock entry – see the second part for a wonderful example).

**Applicability:** all versions of Microsoft Project

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One of the short comings of Microsoft Project is that it does not have a dependency of Task B on Task A so that both SS and FF dependencies are respected. Why would we need that? There are situations where a Task that is parallel to a group of Tasks must have their same Duration and must change its own when their total Duration changes.

**Try it the old way:** say you try 3 tasks A, B and C. You then create Task D whose dependence on Task A is SS and whose dependence on Task C is FF. It will stubbornly have its own Duration regardless of the duration of Tasks A, B and C.

We need a solution so that Task D will have the same Duration as Tasks A, B and C no matter what happens to the Start of Task A and the Finish of Task C.

This is needed in situations such as:

- Assigning a supervisor to an Effort Driven Task such as pouring concrete. You need to have a separate Task in order not to confuse Microsoft Project with the changes in the units of the concrete pouring Resources. The supervision effort must be expressed as a Task that expands or contracts depending on how you manage the pouring concrete task, ie, their Duration must be the same.
- Project Management Tasks that span the whole project
- Tasks wherein you assign overheads (that also span the whole project)
- Tasks which span other Tasks where the resource assignment is wildly different

What is commonly known as a **Hammock** task will do the trick. It will have the same Duration as the whole project or as a specific task it is spanning. But there is no automatic or direct way of creating a Hammock Task. Here is a procedure.

## Create a Hammock Task

1. Create a new project and save it under any name.
2. Let the project start on a Monday (Project Information).
3. Create 5 Tasks:

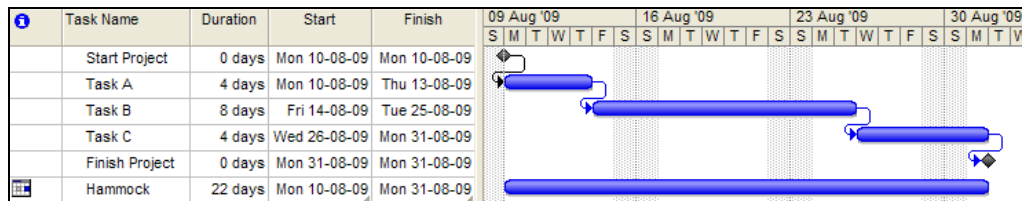
Start Project	0 days (milestone)
Task A	4 days
Task B	4 days
Task C	4 days
Finish Project	0 days (milestone)
4. Link the 5 tasks sequentially: no parallel work.



Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	09 Aug '09							16 Aug '09							23 Aug '09						
				S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T		
Start Project	0 days	Mon 10-08-09	Mon 10-08-09																					
Task A	4 days	Mon 10-08-09	Thu 13-08-09																					
Task B	4 days	Fri 14-08-09	Wed 19-08-09																					
Task C	4 days	Thu 20-08-09	Tue 25-08-09																					
Finish Project	0 days	Tue 25-08-09	Tue 25-08-09																					
Hammock	12 days	Mon 10-08-09	Tue 25-08-09																					

10. **Now change any one of these:** the Duration of Tasks A, B or C, their starting or finishing dates, the project start date, etc.

In the following capture, Task B's duration is extended to 8 days. The Hammock Task expand accordingly:



The Hammock Task's Duration is elastic! It will expand and contract accordingly.

In the next post, you will find a very useful and practical example of the use of a Hammock Task.