

Start at done. Walk backward.

Reverse-engineer a goal into a path you can actually follow. The finish line does not need a motivational soundtrack.

01 / Your backward plan

Start at the finish

What will be true when this is done? Make it observable.

Target date / time window

Ask at each stop: What has to be in place before this can happen?

01 Just before done	→	02 Before that	→	03 Earlier still	→	04 First foothold
Milestone / what is true		Milestone / what is true		Milestone / what is true		Milestone / what is true
_____		_____		_____		_____
_____		_____		_____		_____
Actions to get there		Actions to get there		Actions to get there		Actions to get there
_____		_____		_____		_____
_____		_____		_____		_____
Needs / must happen first		Needs / must happen first		Needs / must happen first		Needs / must happen first
_____		_____		_____		_____
Effort / do by		Effort / do by		Effort / do by		Effort / do by
_____		_____		_____		_____

Now move forward: Start with the right-hand box. Break its actions down on page 2.

My next small action + when / where

Likely roadblock → if that happens, I will...

Add or skip checkpoints to fit your goal. If the path branches, name both prerequisites. A longer path can use another copy.

Make the steps small enough to start.

Turn each milestone into concrete actions. If a step says “figure everything out,” it is probably several steps wearing a coat.

02 / Your next actions

Goal / milestone I am breaking down

Date I will review the plan

Write a verb + a visible result. Keep splitting a task until you know how to begin. List task numbers that must come first.

#	Action / what counts as done	Needs task # / input	Who / help	Effort	Do by	Done
1						☐
2						☐
3						☐
4						☐
5						☐
6						☐
7						☐
8						☐
9						☐
10						☐

Example: “Send two date options to four friends.” Needs: calendar checked. Who: me. Effort: 5 min. Do by: tonight.

Before you go Check dependencies. Add waiting time and a little buffer. Put the first action on your calendar. If the date is unrealistic, change the scope, support, or date. A plan is allowed to learn things.

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03 / Worked example: a simple dinner

Start at the finish

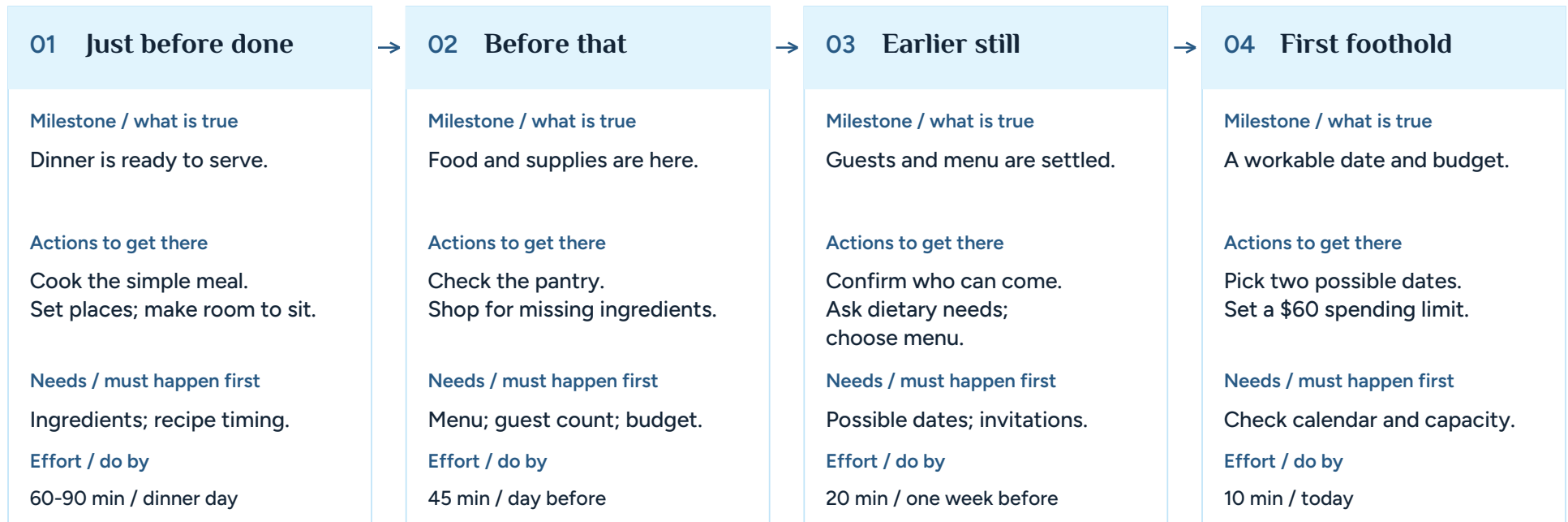
What will be true when this is done? Make it observable.

Four friends have shared a simple dinner at my home.

Target date / time window

Two weeks from Saturday

Ask at each stop: What has to be in place before this can happen?



Now move forward: Start with the right-hand box. Break its actions down on page 2.

My next small action + when / where

Tonight after dinner: check my calendar and choose two dates.

Likely roadblock → if that happens, I will...

If the dates do not work, ask for one alternative and reset the date.

Add or skip checkpoints to fit your goal. If the path branches, name both prerequisites. A longer path can use another copy.