3-LINE CLARITY BLOCK | WORKSHEET

Three lines before any ticket

A ticket is ready when it holds only three things: the user problem, the desired outcome, and the constraints. If it still tells the team *how* to build it, keep rewriting.

1. User Problem

Who is struggling, with what, and why does it matter to them?

- [ ] Names a specific person or role, not "users" in general
- [ ] Describes the problem, not a solution
- [ ] Written in the user's terms, free of internal jargon

2. Desired Outcome

What does success look like? Make it measurable.

- [ ] Describes a change in the user's situation
- [ ] Measurable: you could tell whether it happened
- [ ] Says nothing about how it will be built

3. Constraints

What limits the work, and what will you not build in this pass?

- [ ] Lists real limits (time, systems, budget, policy)
- [ ] Includes an explicit out-of-scope line
- [ ] Every constraint is a fact, not a preference

Ready for a ticket?

- [ ] All three lines are filled in, none left as a gap
- [ ] The desired outcome can be measured
- [ ] Constraints include what is out of scope
- [ ] No line dictates how to build it (problem, outcome, constraints only)

If any box is empty, fix the gap before assigning the work.

Illustrative example

An invented brief, to show the shape. Not a real client.

User problem. New tax clients of a small accounting firm email documents in mixed formats, and staff lose track of what is still missing.

Desired outcome. By the start of tax season, staff can see every new client's missing items in one place, and chasing emails drops measurably.

Constraints. Cannot change the practice management software this year. Out of scope: a new client portal.

A structured starting point, not a live consulting engagement. Validate what you find with users and stakeholders.