

Free PoC vs Prototype vs MVP Decision Matrix

Use this worksheet to decide whether your idea needs a Proof of Concept, Prototype, or MVP before moving forward.

1. Understand the Difference

Stage	Main Purpose	Main Question
PoC	Test technical feasibility	Can this idea work?
Prototype	Test design and user experience	How should it work?
MVP	Test real market demand	Will users use or pay for it?

2. Identify Your Main Uncertainty

Question	Your Answer
Are you unsure whether the technology can work?	

Are you unsure how users should interact with the product?	
Are you unsure whether users want the product?	
Do you need something to show investors or stakeholders?	
Are you ready to launch to real users?	

3. Quick Decision Matrix

Your Situation	Best Starting Point
The technology is new or technically uncertain	PoC
You need to test an AI model, integration, or complex workflow	PoC
You need to visualise the product idea	Prototype
You need feedback on screens and user flow	Prototype
You need to test usability before development	Prototype

You need real users to try the product	MVP
You need to test demand, pricing, or retention	MVP
You want to begin generating revenue	MVP

4. Compare Cost, Time, and Output

Factor	PoC	Prototype	MVP
Primary Focus	Technical validation	Design validation	Market validation
Typical Users	Internal team or technical experts	Test users or stakeholders	Real users
Functional Product	Limited	Usually no	Yes
Revenue Ready	No	No	Potentially
Relative Cost	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Medium to High
Relative Timeline	Short	Short	Longer

5. Score Your Project

Select the statement that best matches your current need.

Statement	Select
We need to prove that the technology can work	
We need to test the user journey and design	
We need real users to test the product	
We need evidence before investing in full development	
We need to test willingness to pay	
We need something visual for investors or internal approval	

Your Result

- Mostly technical uncertainty: Start with a **PoC**.
- Mostly design or usability uncertainty: Start with a **Prototype**.
- Mostly market or customer uncertainty: Start with an **MVP**.

6. Plan Your Next Step

Planning Question	Your Answer
What is the biggest assumption you need to test?	
Who will review or use the first version?	
What result will confirm success?	
What is your available budget?	
When do you need the result?	
What will you build after validation?	

Founder Reminder

You do not always need to begin with an MVP.

Start with the smallest stage that answers your biggest unanswered question:

- Use a PoC to prove feasibility.
- Use a prototype to improve the experience.
- Use an MVP to validate demand.

Ready to Estimate Your Product Cost?

Use our free MVP cost calculator to estimate your budget based on your product stage, features, platform, timeline, and development needs.

[Calculate Your MVP Cost for Free](#)