

TAMCOST | How to Use

Construction Cost Estimation Software — Step-by-Step Guide

KEY CONCEPTS

CONCEPT	WHAT IT IS
Estimate	Top-level project container: all cost data.
CBS Item	Cost Breakdown Structure scope of work (e.g. Earthworks). Nestable in parent-child hierarchy.
Activity	Task within a CBS item defining duration (days × hrs/day) and resources consumed.
Resource	Labour, Equipment, Material, Subcontractor, Construction Supplies, or Unique — each with unit cost and optional waste factor.
Pay Item	Customer-facing invoice line. Carries markup % and contingency/risk %.
Indirect	Overhead costs (supervision, permits, insurance) spread across pay items before markup.
Plug Cost	Optional override that replaces activity-calculated cost on a CBS item.

COST FLOW

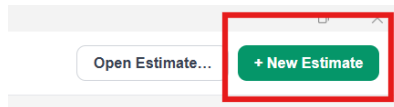


STEPS

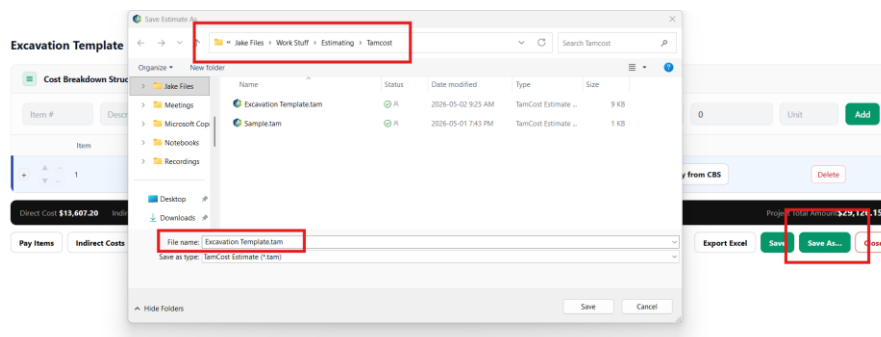
1. Create a Template

1.1 Saving a Template

Templates are a fundamental part of how TamCost works. Start creating templates by creating a New Estimate.



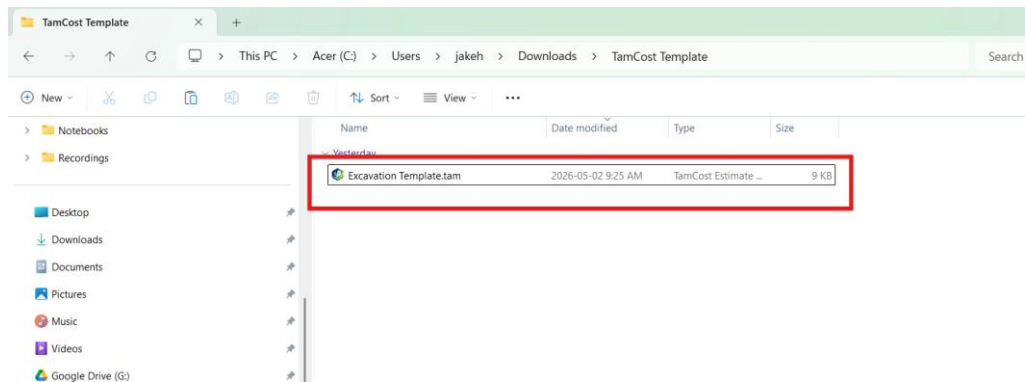
Save As the template and rename it. **Place the template to any folder in your desktop or in your company server.**



2. Create an Estimate

2.1 Saving an Estimate

Copy the template files and save it and rename as your wish to start a new estimate using the MS Windows filing structure.



2.2 Add / Revise CBS and Activities

Revise the CBS and Activities to align with the estimate.

2.3 Update Quotes for material and subcontractors

Add Vendor. Rename the Vendor. Update the vendor price and select “use for estimate” to update the estimate pricing. The “Current (Estimate)” column shows what is being used for the estimate unit rate.

Quote: Excavation Template

[← Back](#)

Vendor Comparison

Resource	Type	Qty	UOM	Current (Estimate)
25mm Minus Crush Aggregate GRV-25mm	Material	500	MT	\$35.00 \$17,500.00
Freight				
PST (%)				
Other Costs				
Grand Total				\$0.00

[+ Add Vendor](#)

Use for estimate

[Remove](#)

\$0.00



2.4 Create Indirect Cost

Create Indirect Cost by adding activities in the Indirect Cost Section.

Indirect Costs
Excavation Template ← Back to Pay Items

Activities							
Item	Name	Qty	UOM	Unit Cost	Total Manhours	Duration (days)	Total Cost
IC.1	Supervision	—	—	—	160	20	\$10,464.00 Delete
Total							\$10,464.00

Add Activity

2.5 Create Pay Items and Assign Markup

Create Pay Items and Assign CBS Items to Pay Item.

CBS Breakdown Excavation Template ← Close

ADD CBS ITEM

CBS #	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	
1.1	Earthworks	0	m3	Add

ITEM #	PAY ITEM	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	COST
1	1	Excavation	1,000	m3	\$13,607.20
2	Click to assign	Backfill	1,000	m3	\$17,500.00

Pay Items ← Fill Page

ADD PAY ITEM

PAY ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	
PI-01	Earthworks	0	m3	Add

PAY ITEM #	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	DIRECT COST
1	Excavation	1,000	m3	\$13,607.20

Check that the CBS total matches with the Direct Cost total in the Pay Item Section to ensure all direct cost as accounted for.

CBS Breakdown Excavation Template ← Close

ADD CBS ITEM

CBS #	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	
1.1	Earthworks	0	m3	Add

ITEM #	PAY ITEM	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	COST
1	1	Excavation	1,000	m3	\$13,607.20
2	1	Backfill	1,000	m3	\$17,500.00

Total CBS Cost: **\$31,107.20**

Pay Items ← Fill Page

ADD PAY ITEM

PAY ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	
PI-01	Earthworks	0	m3	Add

PAY ITEM #	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UOM	DIRECT COST
1	Excavation	1,000	m3	\$13,607.20

Total Direct Cost: **\$31,107.20**

Assign Markup by adjusting contingency %, Markup % or Margin %. You can also manually enter the unit price if you want to have it rounded to a whole number.

Pay Items

Excavation Template

← Add CBS ← Back to Estimate

Add Pay Item

Pay Item No * Description * Qty UOM Add

e.g. PI-01 e.g. Earthworks 0 m3, ea... Add

Pay Item No	Description	Qty	UOM	Direct Cost	Indirect Cost	Cont. / Risk %	Unit Cost	Markup %	Unit Price	Amount	Margin %	
1	Excavation	1000	m3	\$31,107.20	\$10,464.00	10 %	\$45.73	10 %	50.30	\$50,300.00	9.09 %	Delete

Project Summary

DIRECT COST	INDIRECT COST	CONTINGENCY / RISK	TOTAL COST	PROJECT MARKUP %	PROJECT TOTAL AMOUNT	PROJECT MARGIN %
\$31,107.20	\$10,464.00	\$4,157.12	\$45,728.32	10.00%	\$50,301.15	9.09%

Indirect Costs

3. Create Reports

3.1 Create Pay Item, CBS, Resource Usage or Indirect Cost reports

Reports

Excavation Template

← Back

Pay Items Open

Pay item breakdown with CBS cost allocations

CBS Open

Complete CBS with all activities and resources expanded

Resource Usage Open

All resources used across the project, grouped by type

Indirect Costs Open

Indirect cost items with all activities and resources expanded

Reports can be exported to PDF files. I personally use these PDF files for my internal reviews with PM's and Supers.

Print / Save PDF

Excavation Template

Pay Items Report

Pay Item	Description	Qty	UOM	Direct Cost	Indirect Cost	Cont/Risk	Total Cost	Unit Cost	Markup %	Unit Price	Amount	Margin %
1	Excavation	1000	m3	\$31,107.20	\$10,464.00	\$4,157.12	\$45,728.32	\$45.73	13.71508946753348%	\$52.00	\$52,000.00	12.1%
Totals				\$31,107.20	\$10,464.00	\$4,157.12	\$45,728.32				\$52,000.00	12.1%



4. Pro Tips

4.1 Create Crews

For more advanced template setups, creating standard crews with labour and equipment would allow for quicker estimate creation.

Crew Definitions

Excavation Template

[Update Crews](#) [Back to Estimate](#)

New Crew
Crew ID: Crew Name: [+ Create Crew](#)

1 **Excavation Crew** unassigned [Delete](#)

Not assigned to any activities.

Add Resource — type to search - Enter to add - Ctrl+K to focus

Search Labour or Equipment by name or code...

Code	Description	Type	UOM	Qty	
EX-20	Excavator (20-25 MT)	Equipment	hr	<input type="text" value="1"/>	Remove
OPFM	Operator Foreman	Labour	hr	<input type="text" value="1"/>	Remove

Assign the crews in the Activities by selecting the crew.

1.1 Excavation

CBS: 1 — Excavation [Back to CBS](#)

Crews
1 [Add](#)
Excavation Crew
Operator Foreman
Excavator (20-25 MT)

Activity Details

Item No	Activity Name	Qty	UOM
1.1	Excavation	1000	m3

Hours / Day	# Days	QTY/CrewHr (source)	Total Direct Cost: \$13,607.20	Notes <input type="text" value="Add notes..."/>
8	10	12.5	Unit Rate: \$13.61 / m3	
Qty / Day	MH/Unit (crew: 1)	QTY/Mhr	Crew Hours: 80	
100	0.080	12.500	Labour: \$5.23 / m3 Equipment: \$8.38 / m3	

Resources

[Manage Resources](#)

Resource — type to search - Enter to add - Ctrl+K to focus

Search by name, code or type...

Sort: Type

Code	Description	Type	UOM	Unit Cost	Qty	Waste %	Total Qty	Hours	Line Total
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4.2 Version Control

Use the Windows filing structure to rename and control version of your estimates. This could be used for tracking addendum changes, strategy changes, etc...

 Estimate 1 - Open Trench.tam	 	2026-05-02 9:25 AM	TamCost Estimate ...	9 KB
 Estimate 1 - Trench Box.tam	 	2026-05-02 9:25 AM	TamCost Estimate ...	9 KB

4.3 Plug Cost

Use the plug cost to do rough high level estimates. This allow you to make quick high level go / no-go decisions.

Excavation Template

Cost Breakdown Structure							
Item #	Description				0	Unit	Add
Item	Pay Item	Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Cost	
+ 1	1	Excavation	1000	m3	\$13.61 \$ 15.00 ×	\$13,607.00 \$15,000.00	Copy from CBS Delete
+ 2	1	Backfill	1000	m3	\$17.50 \$ 20.00 ×	\$17,500.00 \$20,000.00	Copy from CBS Delete

4.4 Filing System

The highlight of TamCost is how estimates are stored. All the meta data for each estimate is stored in Windows Folders. This creates the ability for you to decide how you want to store your data for version control and backup.

