

THE CAPTAIN'S PLAYBOOK

Standard Operating Procedure Template

Free editable template with usage guidance and an approval checklist

Free generic template. This is an illustrative starting point, not a finished or compliant procedure. Tailor every section to your organisation, check sector-specific legal, safety and regulatory requirements with qualified specialists, and have the procedure approved by your own authorised management before use. Using this template does not guarantee compliance, safety or any particular result.

How to use this template

Use one copy of this template per procedure. Keep it as short as the work allows: a procedure should tell a competent person what to do, in what order, who decides, and when to stop and escalate.

- Replace every *[bracketed placeholder]* and delete the italic grey guidance notes before approval.
- Choose the activity first: start with work that is high-risk, frequently repeated, or done differently by different people.
- Write it with the people who actually do the work. Their knowledge is the content; the template is only the structure.
- Write steps as short numbered instructions that start with a verb (Check, Record, Confirm, Escalate).
- Test the draft on a real or realistic case, carried out by someone other than the author, and fix what confuses them.
- Delete sections that genuinely do not apply, and say so in the scope rather than leaving them blank.
- Only your organisation's designated approver can approve the procedure. Record the approval, version and effective date.
- Communicate the change, train the people affected, record acknowledgement, and review on the schedule you set.

Approval checklist

Run through this list before the procedure goes to the approver.

- ☐ The purpose links clearly to our mission, objectives and Business DNA.
- ☐ Scope and out-of-scope boundaries are stated.
- ☐ Every step is numbered, starts with a verb and has a clear expected result.
- ☐ Each step or decision has a named role responsible for it.
- ☐ Decision points and escalation triggers are explicit, with contacts.
- ☐ Known risks, exceptions and the incident-reporting route are covered.
- ☐ Sector-specific legal, safety or regulatory requirements have been checked by a competent person.
- ☐ The draft was tested by someone other than the author, and their feedback was addressed.
- ☐ Quality checks and the records to retain are defined.
- ☐ Training and acknowledgement arrangements are agreed.
- ☐ Owner, approver, version, effective date and next review date are completed.
- ☐ All placeholders and guidance notes have been removed.

Related reading: How to Write a Standard Operating Procedure — thecaptainsplaybook.ai/insights/operational-excellence/how-to-write-an-sop

[SOP title]

Standard Operating Procedure. Remove all grey guidance notes before approval.

1 Document control

SOP title	<i>[e.g. Customer complaint handling]</i>
SOP ID	<i>[e.g. SOP-CS-001]</i>
Version	<i>[e.g. 1.0]</i>
Status	<i>[Draft / In review / Approved / Superseded]</i>
Effective date	<i>[DD Month YYYY]</i>
Next review date	<i>[DD Month YYYY]</i>
Procedure owner (role)	<i>[Role and name accountable for keeping this SOP current]</i>
Approver (role)	<i>[Designated manager with authority to approve]</i>
Department / function	<i>[Department or team]</i>

2 Business DNA and mission alignment

Your organisation supplies its own mission, vision, values and objectives. State briefly how this procedure supports them.

Mission / objective supported	<i>[Which mission statement or objective this SOP serves]</i>
Values or standards applied	<i>[e.g. how your values shape the way this work is done]</i>
Measure of success	<i>[How you will know the procedure is working]</i>

3 Purpose and scope

Purpose	<i>[One or two sentences: why this procedure exists]</i>
In scope	<i>[Activities, locations, teams, systems covered]</i>
Out of scope	<i>[What this SOP does not cover, and where to find it instead]</i>
Related documents	<i>[Policies, other SOPs, forms]</i>

4 Regulatory, legal and safety considerations

Requirements vary by sector and country. Have a competent specialist confirm what applies; specialist advice and your obligations take priority over this template.

Applicable requirements	<i>[Laws, regulations, standards or contracts that apply (if any)]</i>
Safety or welfare notes	<i>[Hazards, PPE, stop-work authority]</i>
Confirmed by / date	<i>[Name, role, date]</i>

5 Inputs, prerequisites and required tools

Input / prerequisite / tool	Details or location	Who provides it

6 Roles, responsibilities and authority

R = Responsible (does the work), A = Accountable (one per activity), C = Consulted, I = Informed. Include any authority limits, e.g. spending or refund thresholds.

Activity / decision	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3	Role 4

Authority limits	<i>[e.g. Team leader may approve up to [amount]; above that, escalate to [role]]</i>
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7 Risk controls

Risk or failure point	Likelihood / impact	Control in this procedure	Step reference

8 Procedure steps

Short, numbered, imperative steps. One action per step. Add rows as needed.

No.	Input / trigger	Action (start with a verb)	Expected result
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

9 Decision points and escalation

If this happens (trigger)	Then do this / decide	Escalate to (role, contact, timeframe)

10 Exceptions and incident reporting

Permitted exceptions	<i>[When a departure from this SOP is allowed, and who authorises it]</i>
Incidents and near misses	<i>[How and where to report, within what time, and to whom]</i>
Immediate containment	<i>[First actions to make the situation safe]</i>

11 Quality checks and evidence records

Check or record	Where it is kept	Retention period	Owner

12 Training and acknowledgement

Who must be trained	<i>[Roles]</i>
Training method	<i>[e.g. walkthrough, supervised practice, refresher]</i>
Competence confirmed by	<i>[Role]</i>

Name	Role	Date trained	Signature / acknowledgement

13 Approval and sign-off

Approval is a decision by your organisation's designated approver. An external adviser does not approve your procedures.

	Name and role	Signature	Date
Prepared by			
Reviewed by			
Approved by			

14 Revision history and periodic review

Version	Date	Summary of change	Approved by

Review frequency	<i>[e.g. every 6 or 12 months, and after any incident or process change]</i>
Review triggers	<i>[Events that require an early review]</i>

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