



OPERATIONS TRAINING / HUMAN-EXECUTED SOPs

SOP Creation Guideline

A short decision guide for turning real work into instructions people can execute.

THE STANDARD A qualified person who did not write the SOP completes the work correctly, safely, and without live coaching.

Use the three files for three different jobs

1. Learn the decisions in this guide.

Use these pages to decide what to document, what to remove, what evidence to collect, and when the SOP is ready.

2. Build in the blank template.

Put the approved outcome, context, procedure, controls, proof, and ownership into the editable template supplied with this toolkit.

3. Compare with the worked example.

Use the example to see how the pieces connect. Reuse its structure, never its organisation-specific facts or thresholds.

DOCUMENT CONTROL	VALUE
Version	2.0
Status	Working guideline - approve before controlled use
Owner	[Role accountable for the SOP system]
Review	[Date and event-based review triggers]

01 / CHOOSE THE TARGET**Define the result before the procedure**

An SOP is useful only when it points at an observable outcome. If the destination is vague, the steps will optimise activity instead of performance.

Write one observable end state.

Name what must be true when the process works. You are ready to continue when a reviewer can identify evidence that would prove or disprove the statement.

Draw the boundary around one repeatable process.

Record the trigger, end state, intended user, included cases, exclusions, and downstream handoff. Split the work when different outcomes, owners, or control systems are involved.

Assign one accountable owner.

Name the role that resolves conflicts, approves the operating method, owns performance, and decides when the SOP changes or retires.

DO NOT DOCUMENT YET Pause when the process is experimental, changes every case, or has unresolved policy. Stabilise the method or publish a clearly temporary work instruction with a short review date.

The first page of the SOP should answer

- What result must this process produce?
- What event starts it, and what observable state ends it?
- Who may perform it, and who owns or approves it?
- Which cases belong here, and where do excluded cases go?

02 / FIND THE TRUTH

Observe the work, then narrow the context

Memory produces the ideal process. Evidence reveals the real one. Start wide enough to locate the process, then focus on each decision, control, exception, and handoff.

Collect evidence from the work itself.

Watch representative cases. Review system records, tickets, logs, screenshots, policies, and existing instructions. Interview more than one operator when possible.

PRO HACK · MAKE THE INVISIBLE WORK VISIBLE

Record every activity, even when it looks too small to matter. You can log it manually in Excel, or use RAFAI—built to make workday time studies easier. Your study data stays on your phone and is never sent to AITOC, so you can measure the real work safely.



SCAN TO OPEN

Download RAFAI from the App Store, or register at aitoc.io/raiai.

Separate facts from gaps.

Mark each statement as verified evidence, assumption, open question, or recommendation. Conflicts that change safety, authority, decision rules, or expected output block approval until the owner resolves them.

Concentrate context around the critical step.

Keep only information that changes the action, decision, control, or proof. Extra material may help navigation, but it cannot replace missing process evidence.

The seven fields behind an executable step

FIELD	WHAT MUST BE LOCALLY CLEAR
Trigger and input	Observable event, object, and prerequisites.
Responsible role	Who is qualified and authorised to act or approve.
Exact location	Named tool, screen, field, document, or work area.
Local evidence	Relevant approved source, normal case, and edge case.
Decision threshold	Observable rule and authoritative source for each branch.
Risk and control	Failure to prevent, check to perform, and escalation route.
Output and proof	Expected state, handoff, and record retained.

03 / SIMPLIFY FIRST

Improve the process before freezing it in text

A clear SOP cannot rescue a confused process. Map what really happens, remove avoidable motion, and keep only the sequence that produces the outcome and protects the controls.

Map the normal path from trigger to evidence.

Place the real actions in chronological order. Show where the work pauses, changes owner, creates a record, or reaches a completion state.

Expose every branch.

For each decision, write the observable condition, every valid route, the unknown route, and where each route reconnects or ends.

Question work that cannot change the result.

If an action does not change the outcome, required evidence, control, or handoff, remove it, combine it, automate it later, or explain the legitimate constraint that keeps it.

Separate distinct processes.

A branch with a different owner, outcome, risk model, or approval path usually deserves its own controlled procedure instead of a large nested section.

READY TO WRITE The path has one clear trigger, explicit branches, named owners, controls at the point of risk, and an end state that produces checkable evidence.

Build the skeleton in this order

1. Trigger and entry conditions.
2. Normal action path.
3. Decisions and exception routes.
4. Controls and stop conditions.
5. Output, record, and handoff.

04 / MAKE IT EXECUTABLE**Write actions, decisions, controls, and proof**

A useful instruction removes operational guessing. The reader should know what to do, where to do it, what condition changes the route, and what proves completion.

Begin each instruction with a specific verb.

Name one main action, the exact object or location, and the expected result when it is not obvious. Use approved system, field, form, and role names.

Turn judgment into observable rules.

Write: If [condition], then [action]. If the condition cannot be confirmed, stop and escalate to [role]. Never hide a decision inside “as needed” or “use best judgment.”

Put the control where the risk occurs.

Place warnings before hazardous or irreversible actions. Put quality checks immediately after the action they verify, with the pass condition and correction route.

End each critical step with proof.

State what changes, what record is created, where it is stored, and who receives the handoff. Completion should be visible to someone who was not present.

INSTRUCTION ANATOMY Actor + action + object + exact location + acceptance condition + next route.

Replace vague language at the source

- Replace “quickly” with a time or service condition.
- Replace “check everything” with named fields and a pass condition.
- Replace “handle appropriately” with an observable branch and owner.
- Replace “try again” with retry eligibility, limit, and escalation.

05 / PROVE IT WORKS**Test the SOP with a representative user**

A polished document is still a hypothesis. The release evidence is a qualified person completing realistic work without coaching from the author.

Test with someone who did not write it.

Give the user realistic inputs and the normal access they would have at work. Observe silently unless safety requires intervention.

Record friction as a defect, not a user problem.

Capture questions, pauses, searching, wrong turns, skipped or misordered steps, unsafe actions, missing access, output accuracy, and completion time.

Fix critical defects and repeat the affected test.

The SOP is ready only when the representative user reaches the correct end state, creates the required evidence, and does not need hidden knowledge to make decisions.

Release gate

- The process owner confirms the sequence, decisions, and boundaries.
- Required safety, legal, financial, privacy, security, or compliance reviewers confirm the controls.
- A representative user completes the process without live coaching.
- The owner approves one version, one publication location, and the effective date.
- Superseded copies are archived or redirected so users cannot choose the wrong version.

STOP RELEASE Do not publish while a failed safety, legal, compliance, privacy, security, or mandatory quality check remains open.

06 / KEEP IT TRUE

Measure the process and maintain the source of truth

The SOP is not the goal. The operating result is. Monitor the smallest set of evidence that proves the process works and review the document when reality changes.

Choose evidence that proves the outcome.

Use a small set of quality, time, cost, risk, and completion signals. Each signal needs a source, owner, review frequency, and locally approved threshold.

Connect actions to the evidence they can change.

When a result moves, inspect the decision, control, handoff, or behaviour that can influence it. Training completion and document views are supporting signals; they do not prove correct execution.

Review on schedule and when the process changes.

Trigger early review after an incident, audit finding, recurring question, system or policy change, broken link, new owner, or performance drift.

Retire old truth deliberately.

Publish one authoritative version. Record revision history, redirect links, archive superseded copies, and communicate changes to affected users.

The final authoring loop

1. Define the observable result and boundary.
2. Observe the real work and resolve material gaps.
3. Narrow context around each critical step.
4. Simplify the path before documenting it.
5. Write exact actions, branches, controls, and proof.
6. Test with a representative user; fix and retest.
7. Approve one controlled version; monitor and maintain it.

FINAL TEST Can a qualified person complete the process correctly, safely, and without live coaching? If not, improve the SOP or the prerequisite training, then test again.