

Workflow: Operational Guidance and Execution

Toolkit 3.7

5S (Creating an Organised Work Environment)

target audience

Leadership team, strategic partner, supervisors, and contractors.

what it is

Picture a production environment that is always untidy, disorganised, and dirty, except during special occasions when there is a special visitor or a safety inspection. The access roads are potholed, the receiving area is disorganised, the packhouse is dusty, material from work in progress is lying around, and carton and pallet storage is poorly organised. Nothing is stored neatly - everything seems to be piled in the first place that comes to mind, even in passages and in front of fire extinguishers. Frequently used items such as tools, change parts and cleaning equipment are not stored in dedicated places, resulting in wasted time to search for items whenever they are required. Offices are disorganised with piles of papers on desks. Drawers and cupboards are cluttered with old paperwork and unneeded items. Toilets and tearooms are unhygienic.

Alternatively, one can picture a work environment that is tidy, organised, clean, and staffed with people sufficiently disciplined enough to keep it that way. There is a place for everything, and everything is in its place. There are clear standards for neatness, and everyone is complying to these standards. This will be the type of work environment that will support good performance, safety compliance and continuous improvement.

The webpage [5S Today](#) defined 5S as follows:

"5S is a system for organizing spaces so work can be performed efficiently, effectively, and safely. This system focuses on putting everything where it belongs and keeping the workplace clean, which makes it easier for people to do their jobs without wasting time or risking injury."

5S was developed by the Japanese and their Toyota Production System (TPS) and is still used today as a cornerstone practice for continuous improvement. Practices such as Problem Solving, Visual Management and Preventative Maintenance can only be implemented effectively if the principles of 5S have been embedded.

The term 5S comes from 5 Japanese words starting with an "S" and translated into English:

- **Sort** – Decide what is needed and how much is needed; then remove anything from the area that is not required. Examples would include overgrown vegetation, old irrigation systems, unused spares, and equipment.

- **Shine** – Thoroughly clean the workplace and identify and eliminate all sources of contamination. Examples would include dead vegetation from weeding and pruning in the orchard, and oil spills and dust in workshops.
- **Set in Order** – Place items in locations that are convenient to the workflow of the area and label them whenever possible to make it easier to maintain and audit.
- **Standardize** – Clearly establish standards for Sort, Shine, and Set in Order and make sure that everyone knows the standards.
- **Sustain** – Put in place the procedures, schedules, training, and audits to ensure that the established standards are maintained.

why it is important

Takashi Osada, in his book *The 5S's: Five Keys to a Total Quality Environment*, said:

"If you can do 5S, you can do anything. The company that can do well with the 5S's can also do well with all the other practices. The company that cannot even implement the basic 5S's, will not be able to do any of the other things required of a competitive organisation."

A culture embracing good 5S practices will have a distinct advantage in a competitive world. Being organised and disciplined will have a direct impact on:

- Workplace and food safety compliance.
- Productivity and continuous improvement.
- Effective maintenance practices.
- Effective problem solving.
- Overall teamwork and morale.
- Waste reduction / Cost saving.

success factors

What are the success factors for 5S?

- **Leadership commitment and understanding** – Leadership should start the initiative in their own work environments, i.e., offices etc.
- **A formal 5S launch** – Start with a collective **first S = Sort** by cleaning up, sorting, and discarding clutter.
- **A clear 5S vision** – A 5S vision and end-state description to provide guidance for the development of standards.
- **Team and employee awareness and participation** – This is not something that can be driven from the top. It must be owned and driven internally by the workplace teams.
- **Setting 5S standards (what does good look like?)** – 5S standards to be developed by the supervisors and their teams.

- **Discipline, discipline, discipline** – Maintain discipline and the set 5S standard. Cleaning up is one thing but keeping things neat is more challenging. Accepting a single deviation from a standard will result in multiple deviations.
- **Monitor and control** - Compliance auditing should be done by the workplace teams themselves on a routine basis. 5S could be a standard agenda item on the monthly performance review.
- **Recognition** – Public recognition is very motivating and recognising the best team or area for sustaining 5S standards is a good practice.

execution steps

The process should start with a clear understanding and buy-in from the leadership team. They need to develop an end state guideline or vision, considering requirements for the packhouse in a safe and efficient way. There should be a clear picture of how the packhouse, from receiving to dispatch, should ideally look and operate.

Take the following steps:

1. Do an initial audit to identify the status of 5S versus the guideline. Take pictures for reference and learning. These are typically referred to as “before” pictures.
2. Create awareness by launching a 5S initiative across all functional areas.
3. Management should lead the way and start the 5S implementation in their own offices.
4. Establish a holding area for obsolete items (also called a red tagged area). All items not required in the workplace should be moved to a red-tag area. The red-tag area should be cleared over time, i.e., items should either be disposed of, or an alternative location found.
5. Confirm the discarding policy and apply to all obsolete/surplus/not required items.
6. Do a clear-up exercise and move all extra items into the red tagging area.
7. Agree and formalise the standards for items required in the workplace.
8. Agree and formalise the standard for cleanliness.
9. Introduce an audit and keep track of compliance to standards.
10. Discuss 5S compliance in regular meetings and address deviations formally.

assessment questions

Please Note: There is no minimum / maximum number of questions you can add.

1.	Does management understand the impact of a neat and organised working environment on meeting organisational objectives?
2.	Has a standard been developed for an organised working environment, including administration?
3.	Is there a formal process in place (like 5S) to guide the organisation?

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| 4. | Have 5S standards for neatness and discipline been introduced in all areas? |
| 5. | Are regular and formal 5S audits being conducted and the outcomes discussed during team meetings? |
| 6. | Is there a place for everything and is everything in its place? |

resources

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| 1. | 5S Rules Example |
| 2. | What is 5S? |