

A practical 5S audit

For F&B production lines that need to score honestly, not theatrically

A free worksheet from Cadence Standard

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Print double-sided. Carry it on the line. Score what you see, not what you wish you saw.

What 5S is, in plain English

5S is a workplace organisation method that came out of post-war Japanese manufacturing. It is the entry-level discipline for any lean operation. Done well, it is the foundation that makes standard work, kaizen and audit readiness possible. Done badly, it is theatre.

The five steps, in order:

1. Sort (Seiri) — keep only what you need at the workstation. Anything that is "just in case" goes to a red-tag area for a 30-day decision. If it has not been touched in 30 days, it leaves the production area.

2. Set in order (Seiton) — everything that stays has one home, and that home is labelled. Tools, materials, paperwork, PPE, cleaning kit. Shadow boards, taped floor outlines, colour-coding. The test: a new starter on day one can find any item in 30 seconds.

3. Shine (Seiso) — clean to inspect, not just to clean. The act of cleaning surfaces a leak, a loose bolt, a wear point. Cleaning standards are written, signed-off, and time-boxed. Shine reveals what tomorrow's breakdown will be.

4. Standardise (Seiketsu) — turn the first three S's into a documented standard. One-page visual standards at the workstation. Photo of "good", photo of "not good". The standard belongs to the team, not the office.

5. Sustain (Shitsuke) — the audit cycle. Weekly walk, monthly score, quarterly review. 5S degrades by default, like entropy. The sustain step is the only thing that keeps the first four from collapsing within a quarter.

What 5S is not. It is not a one-off blitz. It is not a clean-up before a customer visit. It is not the responsibility of the cleaning contractor. If your 5S board is only updated for auditors, it has stopped doing its job.

5S audit checklist — score each item Yes / Partial / No

Score on what you see today, not what is "usually" the case. Total at the bottom. Six items per phase, 30 items total.

Sort

- Only tools/materials needed for current production are present at the workstation
- No personal items (drinks, phones, bags) in the production area
- A red-tag area exists and is reviewed within the last 7 days
- No expired or out-of-date materials in active storage
- No broken or damaged equipment left in the area "just in case"
- Nothing on top of cabinets, racks or above shoulder height that isn't in active use

Set in order

- Every tool has a labelled location (shadow board, drawer label, taped outline)
- Materials are stored at point of use, not in a separate room
- PPE has a dedicated, signed location for each operator
- Cleaning kit has a single home, clearly labelled
- Floor markings for walkways, equipment and storage are intact and visible
- Reach distances and ergonomics have been considered (no awkward reaches for high-frequency items)

Shine

- Floors are clean — no spills, scrap or standing water from this shift
- Equipment surfaces are free of dust, residue, swarf or product build-up
- Lights, vents, guards are clean enough to read labels through
- Cleaning schedule is posted, in date, and signed by the named operator
- No tape, cable ties, or "temporary" fixes older than 7 days
- Daily clean is integrated into the shift handover (not a separate task)

Standardise

- One-page visual standard is posted at the workstation
- Standard includes a "good" photo and a "not good" photo
- Standard is dated and version-controlled
- Operators were involved in writing the standard (signature/initial visible)
- Standard work for changeovers is at the line, not in a folder in the office
- Deviation from standard has a clear, written escalation route

Sustain

- 5S audit is performed weekly by the line/cell, not by a quality manager
- Score is posted publicly with a trend line going back 12 weeks
- Actions from the last audit are visible, with an owner and a date
- Score is reviewed in a daily/weekly tier meeting
- At least one improvement has been implemented in the last 30 days
- The team leader can name the lowest-scoring item and what they're doing about it

Scoring: Yes = 2, Partial = 1, No = 0. Maximum = 60.

Score	Read
50–60	Strong. The next gain is in standard work and kaizen rigour, not 5S.
35–49	Mid. The standard is on the wall but not in the team's hands.
20–34	Weak. 5S is being done for auditors, not for the line.
Below 20	The system has collapsed. Treat as a full reset, not a tune-up.

Next steps

If you scored 50+: You don't need a 5S intervention. The next investment is in standardised work, takt-time balance and A3 problem-solving discipline. That is what the Lean Operations Toolkit covers.

If you scored 35–49: Your standards exist but ownership has slipped to the office. Pick the lowest-scoring of the five phases. Run a one-week refresh with the line leader as owner. Re-audit at the end of week 4.

If you scored 20–34: Run a full reset on a single workstation or cell first — not the whole line. Document the before/after with photos. Use that cell as the template for the others. Plan eight weeks, not eight days.

If you scored below 20: Stop. This needs a leadership conversation before it needs a 5S programme. The audit will not stick until the daily management routine supports it. Happy to talk through this one if useful — cadencestandard.co@gmail.com.

The Lean Operations Toolkit picks up where this audit ends. Four files I use on the shop floor: 5S audit workbook (the polished version of this sheet), kaizen tracker, standard work pack, A3 problem-solving template. £97, instant download.

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