ARDENT WORKSHOP

AN ARDENT WORKSHOP PRODUCT

The One-Page SOP Template

Free, fillable, and shown filled in.

1 sheet · free · no signup

General templates — not safety, legal, or compliance advice.

The sheet everything else is built around

A standard operating procedure is the one page that lets somebody else do a task the way you would. This one is free. It appears **blank and genuinely fillable**, so you can click a highlighted field and type — and then **filled in for an invented candle shop**, so you can see how much detail is enough before you write a word. After that, the five rules for writing a step somebody else can actually follow.

HOW TO FILL IT IN

Open this PDF in a PDF reader and click any field highlighted in amber — they are real form fields, not pictures of blanks, and every cell in the materials table, the step table and the what-if table is typeable. Each is pre-filled with its own label, so select the label and type over it. If the fields will not click (some browser and phone viewers show PDFs flat), save the file and open it in the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, or print it and fill it in by hand.

PLEASE READ

This is a general template and general guidance for writing down your own procedure. It is not safety advice, not legal or employment advice, and not regulatory compliance advice. Where an equipment manufacturer's manual, a regulator or licensing scheme, your insurer or your landlord say something different from what you write on it, that requirement wins and the page is what changes. Find out what applies to your trade in your area before a procedure goes on a wall and is followed by somebody who trusts it.

What is in this free download

- **The one-page SOP template, blank and fillable** — purpose, trigger, who owns it, what you need before you start, safety, the numbered steps, the quality check that says it worked, what to do when it does not, and a version line.
- **The same template filled in** for an invented shop — twelve numbered steps, a materials table, a quality check with real tolerances, and a what-to-do-when-it-goes-wrong table, with the owner’s own words marked so you can tell them from the template’s.
- **Five rules for writing a step somebody else can follow**, including the one that does most of the work: replace every adjective with a number.
- What the sheet is for, the four mistakes people make most, and the one part not to delete.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (ONE PAGE)

The core template: what it is for, what starts it, the steps, how you know it was done right, and who owns it.

The one-page form every routine task in the shop gets written on. Purpose, trigger, who does it, what you need before you start, the numbered steps, the quality check that says it worked, what to do when it does not, and a version line. It is deliberately one page: a procedure that runs to four pages is not read, and a procedure that is not read is a document, not a procedure.

When to use it: Use this for anything that happens more than once and matters when it goes wrong. Use the Work Instruction (document 03) instead when the task is physical and a photo would say more than a paragraph — a jig setup, a fold, a knot, a decoration. Most shops end up with a mix: procedures for the flow, work instructions for the hands.

Common mistakes to avoid:

- Writing steps that describe the task rather than instruct it. "Ensure the material is prepared appropriately" tells a new person nothing; "Cut four pieces at 12 inches, sand the ends with 220" tells them everything. Section 04 of the guide is entirely about this.
- Skipping the trigger. A procedure with no trigger is a list of instructions waiting for someone to already know they should be reading it, which defeats the point.
- Leaving out the quality check. Without it the procedure says how to do the task and never says how to tell it was done right, so the helper's version of "finished" becomes the shop's.
- Writing it alone at a desk. The steps you leave out are precisely the ones you do without noticing. Write it while doing the task, or have someone else do the task from your draft and mark every place they had to ask.

DO NOT DELETE THIS PART

The Quality Check section — It is the only part of the page that converts effort into a standard. Steps tell a person what to do; the quality check tells them — and you — whether the result is acceptable. Delete it and you have written instructions that cannot fail, which means they cannot succeed either.

WHERE YOUR SHOP MAY DIFFER

One page is a target, not a rule. A genuinely long task — a full production run, a market setup — may need two, and that is fine. What is not fine is one document covering four unrelated tasks because they happen on the same day. If your page needs a heading that says "and then, separately," you have two procedures.

FILL THIS ONE IN

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Procedure: [Procedure Name] . Reference number: [SOP Number] . This procedure belongs to [Shop or Business Name] and describes how this task is done here.

1. Purpose — Why This Procedure Exists

[In One or Two Sentences, What This Procedure Is For and What It Protects]

Write the consequence, not the activity. "So every candle in a batch has the same fill weight and the same burn" is a purpose; "to describe the candle pouring process" is a title with extra words.

2. When This Happens — The Trigger

This procedure starts when: [The Event That Starts It] (an order arrives, a machine is switched on, the day begins, stock drops below a level)

It happens [How Often - every order, daily, weekly, per batch] and normally takes about [Typical Time to Complete] .

It is finished when: [How You Know It Is Done] .

3. Who Does It, and Who Owns It

Normally performed by: [Role or Person Who Does This Task] .

This procedure is owned by [Owner of This Procedure] , who keeps it correct. A person may do this task unsupervised once they have been signed off on it — see the Training and Sign-Off Record.

Anything not covered here is decided by [Who to Ask When This Page Does Not Cover It] , not invented on the spot.

4. Before You Start

Have these to hand before step 1. Stopping halfway to fetch something is where mistakes and half-finished work come from.

What you need	Specifics — size, grade, setting, quantity	Where it is kept

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Materials, tools, machine settings, safety equipment, files or templates, and anything that must be switched on or warmed up first.

5. Safety — Read Before The First Time

[Hazards in This Task, and What Protects Against Each] (leave this section in even if the answer is none)

Required protective equipment: [PPE Needed for This Task].

Stop and get [Who to Stop For] if:
[The Conditions Under Which Someone Should Stop Rather Than Continue].

6. The Steps

One action per step, starting with a verb, with a real number wherever a number exists. Write them so a competent stranger could follow them without asking you a question.

#	Do this	So that / watch for

The right-hand column is for the reason or the thing that goes wrong at that step — the part a person needs in order to adapt when reality differs slightly from the page.

7. The Quality Check

Before this is called finished, check: [What Must Be True for the Result to Be Acceptable] (with numbers wherever there is a number)

Checked by: [Who Checks - the person who did it, or someone else] .

If it does not pass: [What Happens to Work That Fails - rework, scrap, set aside for the owner] . Record it at [Where Failures Are Recorded] .

8. When It Does Not Go To Plan

The three things that most commonly go wrong in this task, and what to do about each. Anything not listed here goes to the Exception and Escalation Sheet.

If this happens	Do this	Tell who

9. Version

Version [Version Number] , written by [Who Wrote This Version] on [Date Written] . Supersedes [Previous Version Number or None] . Next review due [Date Next Review Is Due] .

What changed in this version: [What Changed Since the Last Version] .

Anyone may mark this page wrong. Write the date and what is wrong here, and give it to the owner: [Space to Note a Problem With This Procedure].

WORKED EXAMPLE

The same procedure, filled in

The words **in amber** are the ones the owner typed; everything else is the template as it ships. The shop, the people, the product and the numbers are all invented, and the settings are illustrative rather than a recommendation for any real equipment or material — but the shape and the level of detail are exactly what a usable procedure looks like. Read step 7: it does not say “stir well.” Every number on the page replaced an adjective somebody had been using instead.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Procedure: **Pouring an 8 oz Container Candle**. Reference number: **PRD-03**. This procedure belongs to **Northbank Candle Works** and describes how this task is done here.

1. Purpose — Why This Procedure Exists

So every candle in a batch has the same fill weight, the same scent strength, and the same burn — and so a batch can be traced back to its wax and fragrance lot if a customer reports a problem.

Write the consequence, not the activity. "So every candle in a batch has the same fill weight and the same burn" is a purpose; "to describe the candle pouring process" is a title with extra words.

2. When This Happens — The Trigger

This procedure starts when: **stock of any 8 oz scent drops below 12 units, or a wholesale order needs more than we have on the shelf** (an order arrives, a machine is switched on, the day begins, stock drops below a level)

It happens **two to four batches a week** and normally takes about **50 minutes of hands-on work, then 24 hours of curing**.

It is finished when: **twelve tins poured, wicks trimmed, and the batch card filled in and filed**.

3. Who Does It, and Who Owns It

Normally performed by: **anyone signed off on pouring**.

This procedure is owned by **Priya**, who keeps it correct. A person may do this task unsupervised once they have been signed off on it — see the Training and Sign-Off Record.

Anything not covered here is decided by **Priya**, not invented on the spot.

4. Before You Start

What you need	Specifics — size, grade, setting, quantity	Where it is kept
Poured-wax blend	**Container blend, 8 lb in the melter**	**Material shelf B, front**

Fragrance oil	**Weighed at 8% of wax weight**	**Fragrance cabinet, alphabetical**
Vessels	**8 oz straight-sided tins, wiped, room temperature**	**Shelf C, sealed tub**
Wicks	**CD-10, pre-tabbed and centered the day before**	**Wick drawer, labeled bag**
Melter	**Set to 185 F, on 45 minutes before pouring**	**Bench 2**
Scale	**Tared, in grams, checked against the 500 g weight**	**Bench 2**
Batch card	**Blank, one per batch**	**Clipboard by bench 2**

5. Safety — Read Before The First Time

Molten wax at 185 F causes burns, and a spill on skin holds its heat. The melter and the pouring pitcher are both hot to the touch. Fragrance oils are flammable and irritate skin and eyes. (leave this section in even if the answer is none)

Required protective equipment: **heat-resistant gloves when handling the pitcher, safety glasses when adding fragrance, closed shoes**.

Stop and get **Priya** if: **the melter thermostat reads more than 5 F away from the dial setting, there is any smoke or smell of scorching, or wax has spilled onto the bench heater**.

6. The Steps

#	Do this	So that / watch for
1	**Write the batch number and today's date on a blank batch card.**	**Batch number is the date plus a letter: 0812-A.**
2	**Weigh 1,600 g of wax into the melter and set it to 185 F.**	**Wax over 200 F discolors the blend.**
3	**Wipe each of the 12 tins with a dry lint-free cloth and set them on the pouring tray.**	**A fingerprint inside the tin shows through the finished wax.**
4	**Check each wick is centered and the tab is flat on the base.**	**An off-center wick is the most common cause of a tunneling burn.**
5	**When the wax reaches 185 F, hold it there for 10 minutes.**	**This is the melt hold, not the pour temperature.**
6	**Weigh 128 g of fragrance oil into the pitcher.**	**8% of 1,600 g. Recalculate if the batch size changes.**
7	**Add the fragrance to the wax and stir slowly for 2 full minutes by the clock.**	**Under-stirring is why a batch smells strong at the top and weak at the base.**
8	**Let the wax cool to 135 F, checking with the probe, not by eye.**	**Pouring hot is the cause of the sunken well in the middle.**
9	**Pour each tin to the fill line scored inside the jig, about 210 g.**	**Weigh the first tin to confirm, then pour the rest by the line.**

10	Leave the tray undisturbed on bench 3 for 24 hours.	Moving a setting candle causes the surface to craze.
11	Trim each wick to 1/4 inch.	Long wicks are the most common complaint on a first burn.
12	Record the batch number, fragrance, wax lot, and count on the batch card and file it.	The lot number is how a single bad drum is traced later.

7. The Quality Check

Before this is called finished, check: **the fill sits within 1/4 inch of the scored line on every tin; the top is flat with no sink or crack wider than a pencil line; the wick is centered within 1/8 inch and trimmed to 1/4 inch; the tin is clean outside; and the batch card carries the wax lot and the fragrance lot.** (with numbers wherever there is a number)

Checked by: **the person who poured, at trimming, 24 hours later**.

If it does not pass: **a sunken or cracked top goes to the seconds shelf and is sold as a second, never topped up; anything with separation or a wick that will not center is scrapped**. Record it at **the back of the batch card**.

8. When It Does Not Go To Plan

If this happens	Do this	Tell who
Wax reaches 200 F or above	Switch the melter off, let it fall to 185 F, and hold 10 minutes before continuing.	Nobody — note it on the batch card
Surface sinks or cracks after setting	Set the candle aside as a second. Do not top up — a poured top always shows.	Priya, same day
Fragrance separates or beads on the surface	Scrap the batch. Note the fragrance lot on the card.	Priya, before the next batch
Fewer than 12 tins fill	Stop. Do not part-fill the twelfth. Note the shortfall.	Priya

9. Version

Version **3**, written by **Priya** on **June 14**. Supersedes **version 2**. Next review due **June 2027**.

What changed in this version: **pour temperature dropped from 145 F to 135 F after four batches sank in May, and the 2-minute stir was made explicit because 'stir well' was being read as 20 seconds.**

THE PART NO BLANK TEMPLATE TEACHES

How to write a step somebody else can follow

Most first attempts at a procedure fail the same way: they describe the task instead of instructing it. “Ensure the material is prepared appropriately prior to assembly” is a sentence about a step. It is not a step. A step tells a person to do one thing, and tells them how they will know they have done it. Five rules get you there.

Rule 1 — One action per step

If a step joins two verbs with the word and, it is two steps, and the middle one gets skipped. “Preheat the press to 320 F, weigh out 40 grams, and lay the transfer face down” is three steps wearing one number.

Rule 2 — Start with a verb

A step that starts with a verb is an instruction; a step that starts with a noun is a description. It is the fastest way to spot a step you have not actually written yet. Cut. Weigh. Preheat. Clamp. Check. Compare. Record.

Rule 3 — Replace every adjective with a number

This is the rule that does the most work. “Until it looks right,” “a small amount,” “warm,” “snug,” “a while,” “a good bead” — there is a number behind each one that you know and the reader does not. Where there genuinely is no number, name what to compare against: the reference piece, the line on the jig, the sound it makes.

Rule 4 — Say what it looks like when it is right

Every few steps, tell the reader what they should be seeing. A procedure with no checkpoints has to be followed perfectly to work. One with checkpoints can be followed approximately and still come out right, which is what actually happens in a shop.

Rule 5 — Have somebody else do it from your draft

The only reliable test. Hand them the page, do not answer questions, and watch. Every question they have to ask is a missing step; every time they do something you did not intend, you found an ambiguous one.

WHEN WORDS ARE THE WRONG TOOL

If you catch yourself writing “like this” or “about so far” or “you’ll know it when you see it,” stop writing and take a photograph. Physical technique — a grip, an angle, a bead of glue, how tight is tight — is carried by an image in a second and by a paragraph never. And photograph the wrong way too: a right-and-wrong pair teaches more than four correct photographs.

One last measure: keep it to a page. If it will not fit, count the steps. More than about fifteen and you are describing two procedures that happen to run consecutively — split them, and let the first one end by naming the second. A four-page procedure is not more thorough than a one-page one; it is a procedure nobody reads, which is worse than none, because you will believe it is being followed.

This is 1 of 14

The hard part of writing procedures was never this form. It is knowing which ones to write, in what order, and what to put in them. That is what the full pack supplies: a register naming thirty-six procedures a small production shop actually runs on, with ten of them starred as the ones to write before anyone else works a shift.

THE FULL PACK

The **Shop SOP & Work-Instruction Template Pack** adds thirteen more sheets — a photo-slot work instruction, an equipment setup card, opening and closing checklists with twenty-two checks each already written, a quality standard carrying twelve defect families and their usual causes, a packing standard with eight fragility classes, a receiving inspection guide, an exception sheet with fourteen shop problems already decided, a four-stage training record, a handover sheet, a first-week plan, and a revision log. Plus a thirty-nine page guide, a fifty-one situation router, a twenty-eight question “what breaks when you are not there” self-audit, and an **editable Word version of every sheet** alongside the fillable PDFs. **See it at ardentworkshop.com ›** One purchase you keep — files on your own drive, not a template page that changes, gets gated, or quietly disappears.

ONE LAST REMINDER

This is a general template and general guidance for writing down your own procedure. It is not safety advice, not legal or employment advice, and not regulatory compliance advice. Where an equipment manufacturer's manual, a regulator or licensing scheme, your insurer or your landlord say something different from what you write on it, that requirement wins and the page is what changes. Find out what applies to your trade in your area before a procedure goes on a wall and is followed by somebody who trusts it.