

PROCESS LAB PRO

Practical 5S guide

Rollout, audit and sustaining the standard in a manufacturing plant

Part of the 5S Implementation Kit

1S

Sort

2S

Set in Order

3S

Shine

4S

Standardize

5S

Sustain

In this guide: how to prepare and run a 5S rollout, how to measure results with a 0–4 audit, how to turn findings into actions, and how to keep order after the campaign ends.

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Contents

1. How to use the kit.....	3
2. 5S at a glance.....	4
3. Preparing the rollout.....	5
4. Step-by-step rollout.....	7
5. 30 / 60 / 90-day plan.....	13
6. The 5S audit.....	15
7. After the audit: actions and review.....	18
8. Sustaining the standard.....	19
9. Most common mistakes and how to fix them.....	20
10. Questions and answers.....	21
Appendices.....	22

How to read this guide

Rolling out 5S for the first time? Read chapters 1–5 in order, then start with a pilot campaign in one area.

You already have 5S, but it does not work? Go straight to chapters 6–9: the audit, closing actions and diagnosing typical problems.

Running audits? Chapter 6 and the Excel file "5S_Audit_Kit.xlsx" are your main tools.

1. How to use the kit

The kit consists of several files that work together. Each has one job, and data flows between them automatically.

File	What it is for	When you use it
Guide (this document)	The method: how to roll out, audit and sustain 5S.	Before the start, and as a cheat sheet along the way.
5S_Audit_Kit.xlsx	Score sheet (40 questions, 0–4 scale), results dashboard, action plan, red tag register, audit schedule and 30/60/90-day plan.	Daily during the rollout, at every audit.
5S_Audit_Kit_EXAMPLE.xlsx	The same file filled with demonstration data. You will see what the result looks like.	At the start, to understand the logic.
5S_Forms_A4.pdf	Audit form, red tag card, 5-minute checklist, action plan, meeting record.	For printing and use on the shop floor.
5S_Forms_A3.pdf	"Before / after" standard card, 5S results board, cleaning plan.	For printing onto the board in the area.

The work path in six steps

- 1. Settings.** In Excel enter the company name and the list of areas and auditors. The default target is 80% (you can change it in the "Settings" tab).
- 2. Rollout plan.** In the "Rollout_90_days" tab assign owners and dates.
- 3. Zero audit.** Before you change anything, run a full audit and take photos. This is the reference point for all later results.
- 4. 1S–3S campaigns** in the pilot area. Register red tags in the "Red_tags" tab.
- 5. Standard and rhythm** (4S, 5S). Post the board, introduce the 5-minute check, set the audit schedule.
- 6. Monthly review.** The "Dashboard" panel shows the trend, 5S profile and area ranking. Overdue actions are visible in the "Action_plan".

Who this kit is for

For the production manager, 5S leader, process engineer or continuous improvement specialist who is to lead 5S in a manufacturing plant. One lead person is enough, provided they have management's support (chapter 3).

The audit questions are written for a production floor. For a warehouse or office they need a small adaptation (chapter 10).

2. 5S at a glance

5S is a system for keeping the workplace orderly and standardized. The name comes from five Japanese words beginning with S. In this kit we use English names throughout.

	Name	Japanese	What it means in practice
1S	Sort	Seiri	Only what is needed stays. Everything else gets a decision.
2S	Set in Order	Seiton	Everything has a fixed, marked place. A shortage or surplus is visible at once.
3S	Shine	Seiso	Cleanliness combined with inspection. We look for and remove the sources of dirt.
4S	Standardize	Seiketsu	The target state is described and shown in photos, identical across the plant.
5S	Sustain	Shitsuke	Sustaining the standard as a team habit, supported by management.

What 5S is and what it is not

- **It is** the foundation of stable processes. Without order it is hard to introduce standard work, TPM, kanban or quick changeovers (SMED). Each of these tools assumes tools, materials and information are where they should be.
- **It is** a way to detect deviations quickly. When everything has its place, a shortage, surplus or leak is visible immediately.
- **It is not** a general clean-up. Cleaning before a customer visit lasts a week. 5S builds a system that works even when nobody is watching.
- **It is not** a one-off campaign. The first three S can be done in a few weeks. The fourth and fifth decide whether the effect lasts a year.
- **It is not** a tool for punishing people. If the audit is used to find culprits, employees start hiding problems and the results stop being credible.

Which effects can realistically be measured

We do not promise "textbook" percentages, because they depend on the plant. Instead choose 2–3 indicators and measure them before the rollout (chapter 3). Typical, well measurable effects are:

- shorter time to find tools, materials and documents at the workstation,
- fewer reports of missing or wrong tools and labels,
- recovered floor space (m² after removing unneeded items),
- fewer near-miss events related to tripping, leaks and blocked walkways,
- a higher 5S audit score and a stable trend over the following months.

5S does not replace health and safety

5S rules complement safety regulations and procedures, but do not change them. For cleaning machines, marking walkways, waste management and work with hazardous substances, the plant's instructions apply. When in doubt, consult your safety department about the plan.

3. Preparing the rollout

The vast majority of failed 5S rollouts end not during the campaign, but two months after it. So devote the first two weeks to the foundation.

3.1 Sponsor and 5S leader

You need two roles. The **sponsor** (plant or production manager) grants time, approves red tag decisions and visits the areas regularly. The **5S leader** coordinates the rollout, runs audits and watches the action plan. Write these roles down and decide how many hours a week the leader has for it. Without written-down time, 5S becomes an add-on "after hours".

3.2 Choosing the pilot area

Start with one area. The pilot's success is the best argument for the rest. A good area meets most of the criteria below:

Criterion	Why it matters
The shift manager or foreman wants to take part	Without a local leader the campaign turns into an order from above.
The effect will be visible within 2–4 weeks	The team must see a change before motivation fades.
The area is representative (neither the worst nor the model one)	The lessons can be transferred to other areas.
The size fits within the reach of one shift's work	Typically a line, a cell or a point-of-use store. Divide large halls into zones.
You know the value of the loss (search time, downtime, complaints)	It is easier to show the before and after result.

3.3 Goals and indicators

Write the goal in one sentence, e.g. "The line 1 area reaches an audit score of at least 80% within 90 days and holds it for three consecutive audits". Add 2–3 supporting indicators. Examples with the measurement method:

Indicator	How to measure before the rollout
Time to find tools or materials	Time 10 random searches with a stopwatch during a shift. Record the average.
Number of items removed from the area	The red tag register ("Red_tags" tab).
Recovered floor space	Measure the area taken up by unneeded items before and after the 1S campaign.
Number of maintenance requests from the area	A summary of requests from the previous 3 months and the first 3 months after rollout.
5S audit score	The zero audit in the Excel file.

3.4 Training the pilot team

Run 60–90 minutes with the whole pilot team, ideally on the floor, at the workstations. A sample agenda is in appendix A. The key point is that people hear three things: why we are doing this (what it makes easier for them), who decides on red tags, and that the audit is not for judging people.

3.5 Baseline: photos and the zero audit

- **"Before" photos.** Choose 8–12 fixed points (workstations, shelves, cabinets, floor by the machines, storage zones). Mark where to stand so you can later take the "after" photos from the same angle.
- **Zero audit.** Run a full audit according to chapter 6, without first "tidying up the area". You are interested in the real starting point.
- **Enter the score in Excel** as audit no. 1. In the Dashboard it will appear as the "First audit" on the radar chart.

3.6 Materials to prepare

Area	Sample materials
1S Sort	Red tags (form in the kit), a designated quarantine zone, bags, a trolley, the tag register.
2S Set in Order	Labels resistant to shop-floor conditions, tape or paint for floor marking, film or foam for tool shadows, markers, containers.
3S Shine	A cleaning kit permanently in the area, absorbents, spill trays, cleaning supplies, guards.
4S Standardize	A camera or phone for photos, a board, A3 printouts (standard card, results board).
5S Sustain	The audit schedule, the 5-minute check list, a place on the board for results and actions.

Communication: what to tell the team

"This is not an inspection. We want you to search less and work more comfortably. You know best what gets in the way. We decide what stays at the workstation together with you."

The most common concerns are: "who will clean", "they will take my tools" and "it's for two weeks and then everything goes back". Answer each directly before anyone asks.

4. Step-by-step rollout

Each S has the same structure: goal, steps, tools from the kit, example, typical mistakes and closing criterion. You carry out the 1S–3S steps in the pilot area within 2–4 weeks, and build 4S–5S in parallel and refine them over the following months.

1S

Sort Seiri

Only what is needed for work on this shift stays. Everything else gets a decision: return, relocate, sell or scrap.

How we do it

1

Set a usage criterion

Decide with the team how often an item must be used to deserve a place at the workstation. Sample rule: used **every shift** stays at the workstation, **weekly** in the area (e.g. a cabinet or rack), **monthly** in the point-of-use store, **less often** requires a decision.

2

Walk the area with red tags

Every item that fails the criterion or has an unknown purpose gets a red tag: name, quantity, reason (unneeded, damaged, surplus, unknown), date and who tagged it. Look in cabinets, drawers, under tables and on top of racks.

3

Move tagged items to the quarantine zone

Set aside one marked place (the "red zone"). We throw nothing away without a decision, but nothing returns to the workstation either until there is one.

4

Register the tags

Enter each tag in the "Red_tags" tab. The tag number from the form is the key linking the item to the entry.

5

Decide within 7 days

A person with authority (shift manager or sponsor) chooses: **stays** (returns to its place), **move** to another area, **sell or transfer**, **scrap or dispose**. For waste, calibrated tools and hazardous substances, plant procedures apply.

6

Empty the zone and document the effect

Take an "after" photo, count the items and measure the recovered floor space. This data will be useful in the 90-day summary.

Tools from the kit

- Form: **Red tag card** (A4 PDF).
- Excel: **Red_tags** tab (register, decision deadline, days open, statistics).
- Excel: audit questions 1.1–1.8.

Example from the shop floor

At the packing line the team tagged, among other things, a set of fixtures after a model change, a dozen empty returnable pallets and a box of unlabelled fasteners. After a week decisions were made: fixtures to the tool room, pallets to the packaging store, fasteners for identification and reassignment. One row of pallets disappeared from the floor by the line.

Typical mistakes

- Throwing things away without a decision or register, which ends in conflict ("where is my tool?").
- A quarantine zone with no deadline, which after a few months becomes the new dumping ground.
- Sorting only "visible" things: cabinets, drawers and top shelves are left untouched.
- Skipping the workstation's documents, instructions and electronic files.

Closing criterion 1S

All items of unclear status have a tag and a register entry. Decisions were made within 7 days. The quarantine zone is empty or holds only items with a decision deadline. The score for questions 1.1–1.8 in the post-campaign audit is at least 3 points on average.

2S

Set in Order Seiton

Every item has a fixed, marked place, and a shortage or surplus is visible within seconds.

How we do it

1 Observe how the work is done

For 15 minutes write down what the operator reaches for, walks to or bends for. This observation shows what should lie closest and in what order.

2 Assign places by frequency and work sequence

The most frequently used within arm's reach, less often in the cabinet by the workstation, the least often in the point-of-use store. Arrange tools in order of use.

3 Give every place an address

A tool outline or "shadow", a shelf label, a location number on the rack. The label must be legible from 2–3 metres and resistant to shop-floor conditions. Rule: **a new person finds the item without asking.**

4 Set min/max levels

For materials, semi-finished goods and consumables mark the minimum level (signal to replenish) and the maximum (storage limit).

5 Mark the floor and walkways

Storage zones, pallet positions, walkways, fire equipment and exits. When choosing colours and symbols follow the plant's safety rules and applicable standards.

6 Do the 30-second test

Ask a person from outside the area to find five named items and point out what is missing. If it takes more than a few seconds per item, the addressing system needs improving.

Sample colour code

Colour	Typical use
Yellow	Walkways, boundaries of work zones, truck parking spots.
White	Storage places for products, pallets and containers.
Red	Quarantine zone, defective products, fire equipment.
Blue	Materials and semi-finished goods on hold (e.g. awaiting inspection).
Green	Safety equipment, first aid, approved products.

Colour	Typical use
Yellow-black	Hazard places (edges, obstacles, truck traffic zones).

The above is an example of commonly used conventions. What matters most is uniformity across the plant and compliance with internal safety rules.

Tools from the kit

- Excel: audit questions 2.1–2.8.
- Form: **"Before / after" standard card** (A3 PDF): space for photos and a description.
- Sample colour code (adapt to plant rules, table above).

Example from the shop floor

In the tool room every tool got an outline on a shadow board and every drawer a label with a list of contents. After a week the foreman noticed that after a shift a missing wrench was visible at first glance, without counting.

Typical mistakes

- Labels written "quickly" with a marker, which wear off or fall off after a month.
- Addresses made according to the warehouse layout, not the order of work.
- No min/max, so the "order" disappears as soon as a delivery arrives.
- Colour coding different in every department.

Closing criterion 2S

Every item has a fixed place. The 30-second test succeeded. Floor and walkways are marked and fire equipment is accessible. Questions 2.1–2.8 score at least 3 points on average.

3S

Shine Seiso

Cleanliness is combined with inspection: while cleaning we find leaks, looseness and sources of dirt, and then eliminate them.

How we do it

1 Do the first thorough clean as an inspection

Once, clean the machines, guards, floor, racks and lighting. As you go, record anomalies: leaks, looseness, cracks, missing screws, leaking hoses. This is the most valuable result of this campaign.

2 Find the sources of dirt

For every place that gets dirty quickly, identify the source: leak, dust, chips, overflow. Use the 5 Why method (the "5 Whys Worksheet" tool on processlabpro.com).

3 Build a cleaning plan

For each object set: what, with what, how, how often, who and how many minutes. A named owner matters more than a detailed description. Post the "Cleaning plan" form (A3 PDF) in the area.

4 Place the cleaning kit in the area

Broom, dustpan, rags, absorbent, vacuum cleaner: in a fixed place, with an outline. If equipment has to be fetched, cleaning will be put off.

5 Remove the sources instead of cleaning up the effects

Guards, trays, extraction, seals. Enter every action in the action plan with an owner and a deadline.

6 Write down the cleanliness standard

A photo of the "clean" area on the standard card. That way everyone knows what the goal looks like.

Tools from the kit

- Form: **Cleaning plan** (A3 PDF).
- Excel: **Action_plan**: actions eliminating sources of dirt.
- Excel: audit questions 3.1–3.8.

Example from the shop floor

An oil stain appeared under the hydraulic unit every day. Instead of cleaning it every shift, the team entered a seal replacement in the action plan and added a spill tray. After three weeks the stain was gone, and the report from cleaning prevented a more serious failure.

Typical mistakes

- Cleaning without inspection: the dirt goes, but nobody records where it came from.
- Diffused responsibility ("everyone cleans"), meaning nobody.
- Cleaning machines without observing safe-handling rules, including isolating and locking out power according to the plant's procedure.
- Focusing only on the floor, skipping the upper parts of machines and the lighting.

Closing criterion 3S

The area is clean, also in hard-to-reach places. The cleaning plan is posted and filled in. The main sources of dirt are identified and have actions assigned. Questions 3.1–3.8 score at least 3 points on average.

4S

Standardize Seiketsu

The target state is described, shown in photos and identical across the plant, so it does not depend on the memory of individuals.

How we do it

1 Write the standard on one page

The "before / after" standard card (A3) contains photos of the target state of the area's key points, a short description and an update date. Rule: **the standard must be understood in 1–2 minutes, without reading instructions.**

2 Unify markings across the plant

The same colours, symbols and label format in neighbouring areas. Write them down in one plant document and post it in a shared place.

3 Assign roles

Area owner (the person responsible for the score), 5S leader, people responsible for zones. Names on a board in the area.

4 Introduce the 5-minute daily check

An 8-point checklist filled in by the operator at the end of the shift (form in the kit, appendix B). Record deviations in the action plan.

5 Launch the 5S board

Post: the current score and trend, the 3 most important actions, "before and after" photos, the area owner's name, the date of the next audit.

6 Build 5S into existing processes

Training new employees on the area standard, changes to workstation layout (they require a standard update), purchase of new tools (each gets its place right away).

Tools from the kit

- Forms: **Before/after standard card** and **5S results board** (A3 PDF).
- Form: **5-minute checklist** (A4 PDF).
- Excel: audit questions 4.1–4.8.

Example from the shop floor

In the assembly area three standard photos were posted (workstation, material cart, cabinet). A new employee received them on the first day and after a few hours was keeping the layout by himself. The shift manager used the photos to compare the state in the morning and after the shift.

Typical mistakes

- A standard in the form of a multi-page document nobody reads.
- Photos that no longer match reality after the workstation was rebuilt.
- A checklist filled in "in bulk" on Friday or before an audit. Instead of a day-by-day list from the shift, you get a worthless piece of paper.
- Different marking rules in different departments.

Closing criterion 4S

The visual standard is posted in the area and current. Roles are known. The 5-minute list is filled in daily by operators. The 5S board is kept up to date. Questions 4.1–4.8 score at least 3 points on average.

5S

Sustain Shitsuke

Order is a team habit, not a pre-audit campaign. Management sees it, measures it and supports it.

How we do it

1 Set the 5S rhythm

Daily check (5 minutes), weekly leader review, monthly formal audit, quarterly cross audit, annual standards review (chapter 8). Write the rhythm down and enter it in the audit schedule in Excel.

2 Engage management on the floor

A weekly manager visit to one area (gemba), with 3–4 specific questions and decisions on the spot. The team's self-discipline grows where supervisors show interest.

3 Close actions on time

The action plan is a credibility system. If audit findings hang for months, the team concludes that 5S is not important.

4 Recognise progress

Recognise the team with the greatest progress, not only the highest score. Avoid rankings that punish weaker areas and encourage "rescuing the score".

5 Collect employee ideas

A suggestion box or board, an answer within 7 days, implemented proposals visible with the author's name.

6 Measure and discuss the trend

The 5S score and the number of open actions are fixed points of the monthly review meeting.

Tools from the kit

- Excel: **Audit_schedule** (annual plan versus completion).
- Excel: **Dashboard** (trend, radar, ranking).
- Form: **Review meeting record** and **Action plan** (A4 PDF).
- Excel: audit questions 5.1–5.8.

Example from the shop floor

In one area the 1S–3S score reached 90%, but 5S was 45%. The audit showed that order was kept up only thanks to one dedicated person. After introducing a weekly manager gemba and named zone owners, the 5S score rose within two months.

Typical mistakes

- Treating self-discipline as a "personality trait". In reality it is a **system**: rhythm, the role of management and quick closing of findings.
- Audits too rare or postponed "because there is a lot of work".
- Checks on special occasions, and no interest on other days.
- Rewards and penalties based solely on the numeric score, which leads to inflated scores.

Closing criterion 5S

Audits take place on schedule. At least 90% of actions are closed on time. Management visits the area regularly. The score holds at the target level for three consecutive audits. Questions 5.1–5.8 score at least 3 points on average.

5. 30 / 60 / 90-day plan

The plan below is a proven layout for the first three months. You will find the same tasks in the "Rollout_90_days" tab in Excel, where you assign owners and dates and track progress.

Days 1–30: foundation and pilot

Task	Completion criterion
Appoint the rollout sponsor and the 5S leader	The sponsor (plant or production manager) and the leader have their roles and time in the calendar written down.
Choose a pilot area	One area with visible potential and an engaged shift manager. Neither the worst nor the best in the plant.
Set goals and indicators	A written audit score target (e.g. 80%), a deadline and 2–3 measurable outcomes (search time, floor space, number of reports).
Train the pilot team (60–90 min)	Attendance list; the team knows the 5 steps, the red tag and the quarantine zone rules.
Take baseline photos	"Before" photos from the same spots that will later be used for the "after" photos.
Run the zero audit	The full audit sheet in the Excel file; the result is the reference point.
Prepare materials	Red tags, tape, labels, a board, containers for the quarantine zone, bags, cleaning supplies.
1S campaign: sorting with red tags	All items of unclear status tagged and entered in the register.
Resolve the red tags	Decisions within 7 days; the quarantine zone emptied by the agreed deadline.
2S campaign: places, labels, outlines	Every item has an address; min/max set for materials.
3S campaign: cleaning and sources of dirt	The area cleaned, the three main contamination sources identified with actions assigned.
First audit after the campaign	Audit done by someone other than the leader; result compared with the zero audit.

Days 31–60: standard and expansion

Task	Completion criterion
Write down the area standard	Target-state photos posted in the area, described, with an update date.
Introduce the daily 5-minute check	List filled in by operators at the end of the shift; a one-week test on one shift, then all shifts.
Post the 5S board in the area	A board with the score, trend, action plan and the area owner's name.
Train auditors and run calibration	At least 3 auditors; a joint audit of one area and agreed scores.
Set the audit schedule	A yearly schedule in the "Audit_schedule" tab, with auditors and dates.
Extend 1S–3S to 2–3 more areas	For each area: zero audit, 1S–3S campaign, post-campaign audit.

Task	Completion criterion
First cycle of cross audits	Auditors assess areas they do not run; results in the file.
First review of the action plan	All actions have an owner and a deadline; no more than 10% overdue.

Days 61–90: sustaining and rhythm

Task	Completion criterion
Start the monthly 5S review	A 30–45 minute meeting with results, trend and the oldest actions.
Introduce weekly management gemba	A manager visits one area a week, asks questions and records observations.
Plan auditor rotation	The same auditor does not assess the same area twice in a row.
Agree a form of recognition for teams	Recognise the best area and the team with the greatest progress. No competition at the expense of rigour.
Update standards after changes	Every change in the area has an entry and current photos.
Summarise the 90 days	Report: results, effects, conclusions, costs; comparison with the written goals.
Decide on a plant-wide rollout	Sponsor's decision with a plan for the next areas and resources.

The expansion rule

Move on to further areas only when the pilot holds a score at or above target for two consecutive audits. Rushing the expansion is the most common reason 5S "spreads thin" and loses quality.

6. The 5S audit

The 5S audit is a measurement of the current state and a learning tool. Its value depends on integrity: a score inflated out of politeness is worse than no score, because it reassures the team just when it should act.

6.1 Control levels and frequency

Level	Who	How often	Time	Tool
Daily check	Operator / workstation employee	Every shift (end of shift)	5 min	5-minute list (A4)
Weekly review	5S leader, foreman	Once a week	15 min	Walk-through and action plan
Formal audit	Auditor + area owner	Monthly (at least quarterly)	45–60 min	Score sheet in Excel (40 questions)
Cross audit	Auditor from another area	Every quarter	45–60 min	Score sheet in Excel
Standards review	Sponsor, leader, owners	Once a year	2 hrs	Standards, annual results, goals

6.2 Preparing the audit

- Choose **two auditors**: one from outside the area and one from the area (owner or leader). Two viewpoints limit subjectivity.
- Prepare the previous result, the current action plan, a camera and the form (A4 or a laptop with Excel).
- Agree a **fixed walking route**: always the same order, so that results are comparable.
- Run the audit during normal work, not after special preparation of the area. You may announce the period in the schedule, but the specific day need not be known.

6.3 Running the audit

1. **Short introduction** (5 min): purpose of the audit, route, who asks the questions.
2. **Walk-through and on-site scoring**. For each question on the score sheet check the state and enter the score immediately. Score what you see and can confirm, not what someone promises to do.
3. **Evidence**. Take a photo for every score of 0–2. It will help in the conversation and in the action plan.
4. **Conversation with 2–3 employees** (questions 4.x and 5.x): what the markings mean, what their duties are, what gets in their way.
5. **Entering scores in Excel**: in the next free column of the "Scores" tab choose the date, area, auditor and scores.
6. **Discussing the result with the team** (10 min): what works, what needs improvement, who will handle which points.
7. **Action plan**: turn every finding with a score of 0–2 into an action with an owner and a deadline.

6.4 How to score on the 0–4 scale

Score	Meaning	Description
4	Exemplary	Requirement fully met, sustained over time and confirmed by the team.
3	Good	Met for the most part. Minor deviations that the team notices and corrects itself.
2	Partially	Met roughly half-way. Visible gaps, no steady habit.
1	Poor	Individual elements are in place, but there is no system or sustaining.
0	None	Requirement not met or does not exist.
NA	Not applicable	The question does not apply in this area. It is not included in the score.

If a question concerns a set of elements (e.g. "every item has a place"), score on a sample of 5 random items using this rule:

Met in the sample	Score
100% of the sample, no exceptions	4
about 75%	3
about 50%	2
about 25%	1
less than 25% or none	0

The rule of doubt

If you hesitate between two scores, **choose the lower one**. Give a 4 only when the state is sustained over time and confirmed by the team (e.g. in conversation), not merely visible on audit day.

Enter NA (not applicable) only when the question truly does not apply in the area. Do not use NA to dodge an uncomfortable question. Questions with NA are excluded from the score, so abusing NA inflates the result.

6.5 Interpreting the score

Each S score is the sum of points divided by the maximum attainable in the scored questions. The overall score is the average of the five S scores, so each S carries the same weight. Default thresholds (you can change them in the "Settings" tab):

Score	Level	What to do
80% and above	Target met	Maintain the standard, look for improvements, share practices with other areas.
60–79%	Needs improvement	Point out the 3 weakest questions, agree actions with a deadline before the next audit.
below 60%	Critical	Review with management within a week, retraining, 5S leader support.

What to notice on the Dashboard

- **High 1S–3S and low 5S** means order kept up by the effort of individuals, not by a system. Strengthen the rhythm and the role of management.
- **A drop of more than 10 percentage points** between audits calls for a conversation, even if the score stays above target.
- **The score rises, but the list of open actions grows too.** Audits find problems, but they are not closed.
- **Big differences between auditors** point to a need for calibration.

6.6 Auditor calibration

Once a quarter two auditors should assess the same area independently and then compare scores. Discuss discrepancies larger than 1 point on a question and set a rule (e.g. what exactly "a legible label" means). Record the agreements and show new auditors in photos. Two results differing by a few percentage points are normal. A difference of around 20 points means the auditors are scoring by different rules.

Rotate auditors: the same person should not assess the same area twice in a row. Mutual cross audits teach the teams from each other.

6.7 Audit pitfalls

Pitfall	Consequence	How to avoid it
A "show" audit: the area is cleaned before the visit	The score does not reflect everyday reality.	Do not announce the day, audit during work, talk to operators.
Leniency and inflated scores	No actions because "it's fine".	The rule of doubt, calibration, photos for scores 0–2.
Punishing a low score	Teams hide problems.	The ranking is for learning. Reward progress and honesty.
An audit without actions	The score falls, and so does trust in 5S.	Every score of 0–2 goes into the action plan with a deadline.
Adjusting the questions to fit the result	No comparability over time.	Change questions only at the start of the year and record the changes.

7. After the audit: actions and review

7.1 An action plan that gets closed

The "Action_plan" tab in Excel collects findings from audits, the daily check and management visits. A good entry has five elements:

- **Problem description** as a fact ("no labels on rack R-04"), not a judgement ("a mess").
- **Corrective action**: specific and doable ("print and mount labels").
- **Owner**: one person by name or role, not "the team".
- **Deadline**: up to 2 weeks for minor fixes, up to 6 weeks for larger technical actions.
- **Priority**: high (safety, hazard, blocked walkways), medium, low.

Escalation

Overdue by 1 day: a reminder from the 5S leader.

Overdue by 7 days: a talk with the area manager.

Two missed deadlines or a finding repeating in two audits: the topic goes to the monthly review. Ask "why does it keep coming back", not only "who dropped it". The cause is often lack of resources or a mismatched standard.

7.2 Red tags after the audit

If during the audit you notice items without a status, tag them and enter them in the register. Watch the decision deadlines: a tag hanging for more than a week weakens the whole system. In the "Red_tags" tab you will see how many tags are overdue and how many days on average it takes to reach a decision.

7.3 The 5S board in the area

The board should show: the latest audit score and trend (chart from Excel), the 3 most important open actions, "before and after" photos, the area owner's name and the date of the next audit. Print the "5S results board" form (A3 PDF) from the kit. The board must show the truth, also when the score falls.

7.4 Monthly 5S review

A 30–45 minute meeting with the sponsor, leader and area owners. A fixed agenda (appendix C): results and trend, oldest actions, decisions that need management, good practice to replicate, plan for the next month. Keep the meeting record on the form from the kit.

8. Sustaining the standard

When the campaign ends, the real work begins: sustaining. Below are the rhythm and tools that prevent a return to the starting state.

8.1 The 5S rhythm

Frequency	What happens	Owner
Daily	A five-minute check at the end of the shift. Deviations reported to the leader.	Operator
Weekly	Walk-through by the leader and foreman. Manager gemba in one area. Action plan review.	5S leader, manager
Every month	Formal audit. Review meeting. Board update.	Auditor, sponsor
Every quarter	Cross audit and auditor calibration. Red tag review.	5S leader
Yearly	Review of standards, goals and the question set. Plan for the next year.	Sponsor, leader

8.2 Management gemba: eight questions

A manager's visit to the area lasts 15–20 minutes and consists of questions, not assessment. Good questions to ask employees:

1. What gets in your way the most today at this workstation?
2. What did you spend the longest looking for recently?
3. What has changed in the area in the last month?
4. Show me where [a named tool] is and how you check that it is not missing from its place.
5. What does the standard for this place look like and when was it last updated?
6. Which findings from the last audit have been completed?
7. What idea would you like to implement in your area?
8. What do you need (from me) to make 5S easier?

8.3 Recognition without competition

Recognise **progress** first (the largest score gain in the quarter), then level (the highest score). Competing through a pure ranking encourages "fixing the score" instead of fixing the area. What works best is recognising a specific employee idea implemented in the area and showing it to other teams.

8.4 What next: 5S as a base

When 5S works, the way opens to tools that need stable workstations: TPM (autonomous maintenance rests on cleaning with inspection), SMED (changeovers require tools and fixtures to be in known places), standard work, kanban. You will find calculators for these topics at processlabpro.com (e.g. OEE, SMED ROI, Gemba Walk, Kaizen ROI).

9. Most common mistakes and how to fix them

The table below is a quick diagnosis. Read the symptom, check the most likely cause and apply the proposed action.

Symptom	Probable cause	What to do
After 2–3 months everything returns to the old state	No rhythm and no management involvement. 4S and 5S were skipped.	Introduce the daily check and weekly gemba. Name the area owner.
Audits give 90–95%, but the shop floor looks worse	Inflated scores, no calibration, an announced audit.	An auditor from outside the area. The rule of doubt. Photos with scores. Quarterly calibration.
Employees treat 5S as an extra duty	A standard imposed from above, no benefit for people.	Involve the team in choosing places and layout. Show a measurable benefit (search time). Collect and implement their ideas.
Red tags hang for weeks	No decision owner or deadline.	Name a decision-maker, set a 7-day deadline, review the register weekly.
Labels fall off or wear off	Wrong material, no uniform system.	Choose labels resistant to shop-floor conditions. Develop a standard for format and placement.
1S–3S high, 5S low	Order comes from individual effort, not a system.	Rhythm, gemba, auditor rotation, closing actions.
The 5-minute list filled in "in bulk"	The list has no value for the team.	Shorten it to 8 points, introduce a signature at the end of each shift, spot-check during gemba.
The manager "has no time" for gemba	5S is not a priority.	Set a fixed 15 minutes in the calendar. Include the 5S score in the monthly review.
Actions from audits are overdue	No resources, unclear owner, overly ambitious deadlines.	Reduce the number of actions, set priorities, adjust deadlines. Discuss resources at the monthly review.
Different areas have different standards	No common marking rule.	Create one plant document with the colour code and label format.

10. Questions and answers

How long does the rollout take?

A pilot in one area usually takes 4–6 weeks for 1S–3S, and a full rollout with a sustaining rhythm about 90 days. Extending to the whole plant depends on the number of areas and resources, but it is better to roll out in sequence than all at once.

Can I change the audit questions?

Yes, in the "Checklist" tab you edit the wording of the questions (yellow fields). Keep 8 questions for each S so that results stay comparable. Make changes at the start of the year and record what you changed.

How do I adapt the kit to a warehouse?

Questions 1–5 keep their meaning. Replace the examples: workstation → location, machine → rack or picking zone. Add questions on truck routes, location markings and stock accuracy. In Settings enter the warehouse zones as areas.

How do I adapt the kit to an office?

The principles are the same (sorting documents and files, setting in order, clean desks, standards, habit), but the audit questions need rewriting. Consider a separate version of the questions.

What about multi-shift work?

The area standard is shared by all shifts. The 5-minute check ends the shift, and the next shift confirms the state at handover. Audit at different times, including the night shift.

Do I have to buy expensive materials?

No. To start, red tags, tape, markers and labels are enough. Introduce more expensive solutions (foam shadow boards, trays, guards) where a real return is visible.

Who is supposed to clean?

Operators of their own workstations and areas, under the cleaning plan. Cleaning services handle common parts. Record the split in the plan and assign owners.

Does the Excel file need macros?

No. The file works without macros, so it does not require permission to run them. Microsoft Excel 2010 or newer is recommended. Any PDF viewer is enough for printing the forms.

Can I share the kit with other plants in the group?

The licence covers internal use at one plant. For groups and larger rollouts write to kontakt@processlabpro.com.

Appendices

A. Pilot team training agenda (60–90 minutes)

Time	Topic	Format
10 min	Why 5S: the team's problems and the goal of the rollout	Conversation, the question "what gets in your way?"
15 min	The five 5S steps with examples from the shop floor	Presentation with "before and after" photos
15 min	The red tag and quarantine zone: rules and decision authority	Form demonstration, an exercise on one item
15 min	Practice: tagging at one workstation	Exercise in the area
10 min	Rollout plan, roles, audit schedule	Discussion, questions
5–15 min	Questions, concerns, agreements	Conversation

B. The 5-minute list: proposed points

1. Tools and materials are back in their places.
2. There are no unneeded or personal items at the workstation.
3. The floor around the workstation is clean, with no leaks or residue.
4. The machine and guards are clean, no new leaks are visible.
5. Waste bins are emptied or below 80%.
6. Walkways and access to fire equipment are clear.
7. The standard (photo) matches the state of the workstation.
8. Anomalies are recorded (who, what, when) and reported to the leader.

The printable version (A4 PDF) is in the file "5S_Forms_A4.pdf".

C. Monthly 5S review agenda (30–45 minutes)

1. Audit results and trend (from the Dashboard): 5 minutes.
2. Overdue and oldest actions, decisions needed from management: 10 minutes.
3. Red tags past deadline: 5 minutes.
4. Good practice to replicate in other areas: 5 minutes.
5. Results of management visits and employee ideas: 5 minutes.
6. Plan for the next month and assigning responsibility: 5–10 minutes.

D. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Red tag	A card attached to an item of unclear status, with a date, reason and decision owner.
Quarantine zone	A designated place for tagged items until a decision is made.
Gemba	The place where the work is done. "Walking the gemba" is a manager's visit to the area.

Term	Meaning
Min/max	The lower and upper stock limit at a storage location.
Tool shadow	The outline of a tool on a board or insert showing its place.
Standard	A description or photo of the target state against which we check the area.
Cross audit	An audit performed by a person from outside the area.
Auditor calibration	A joint assessment of the same area to align how points are given.
pp (percentage point)	The unit of difference between two percentage scores (e.g. from 70% to 76% is +6 pp).

Licence and contact

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