

NEW EMPLOYEE TRAINING READINESS CHECKLIST

Is your business actually ready to train a new employee?

THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT SIMPLY TO COMPLETE TRAINING

Effective training requires more than assigning an experienced employee to “show the new person how we do things.” The objective is to prepare the employee to perform assigned work correctly, consistently, safely, and to the expected standard. Before training begins, define what the employee must know and do, what standards apply, who will train, and how readiness for independent work will be verified.

1. Define the Job and Expected Results

- ☐ Core job responsibilities and recurring tasks are identified.
- ☐ Critical tasks are distinguished from secondary responsibilities.
- ☐ Expected work results and applicable quality standards are defined.
- ☐ Productivity, timeliness or customer-service expectations are identified where appropriate.
- ☐ Safety requirements are identified where applicable.
- ☐ The employee's authority and decision-making limits are understood.
- ☐ Important responsibilities shared with other positions are clearly defined.

Key Job Responsibilities: _____

Most Critical Tasks: _____

QUICK CHECK

Could a supervisor clearly explain what successful performance looks like after the employee has completed training? If the expected result cannot be clearly described, it will be difficult to train or evaluate the employee consistently.

2. Identify Training Requirements

- ☐ Required business, department and process knowledge is identified.
- ☐ Customer/account, product, service, equipment or technical knowledge is identified where applicable.
- ☐ Required job skills, software, systems, equipment and tools are identified.
- ☐ Communication, documentation or recordkeeping responsibilities are identified.
- ☐ Required safety or compliance training is identified where applicable.
- ☐ Required licenses, certifications, qualifications or prerequisites are confirmed.
- ☐ Refresher or recurring training requirements are identified.

Required Training: _____

3. Confirm Training Materials Are Ready

- ☐ Current SOPs and work instructions are available where needed.
- ☐ Job aids, checklists, forms, policies and reference documents are current and accessible.
- ☐ Training examples, demonstrations, photographs, diagrams or videos are prepared where useful.
- ☐ Required system instructions reflect the current approved process.
- ☐ Obsolete or conflicting instructions have been removed from normal use.
- ☐ Trainers know where the current materials are located.

TRAINING CANNOT RELIABLY COMPENSATE FOR UNCLEAR DOCUMENTATION

If different trainers teach the same task differently, determine whether the problem is the trainer - or whether the process itself has never been adequately standardized. Training should reinforce the approved process, not create a different process depending on who provides the instruction.

PREPARE THE TRAINING PROCESS

4. Assign the Right Trainer

- ☐ The trainer understands the current approved process and consistently performs it correctly.
- ☐ The trainer understands applicable quality, performance, safety and operational standards.
- ☐ The trainer can explain why important steps are required - not merely demonstrate how.
- ☐ The trainer understands what the new employee is expected to learn.
- ☐ The trainer knows how competency will be evaluated.
- ☐ The trainer has sufficient time to provide instruction without unnecessary pressure.
- ☐ The trainer understands which decisions the trainee may and may not make independently.

Assigned Trainer: _____

Backup Trainer: _____

THE MOST EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEE IS NOT AUTOMATICALLY THE BEST TRAINER

Technical experience matters, but effective trainers must also communicate clearly, demonstrate the approved method, observe performance, correct errors, and provide useful feedback.

5. Establish the Training Sequence

EXPLAIN → DEMONSTRATE → PRACTICE → VERIFY → REINFORCE

EXPLAIN	Purpose, steps, expected result, standards, risks and controls.
DEMONSTRATE	Show the approved method.
PRACTICE	Employee performs under appropriate supervision.
VERIFY	Determine whether performance meets the required standard.
REINFORCE	Follow up through observation, coaching and additional instruction when needed.

- ☐ Training follows a logical progression; basic tasks precede more complex work.
- ☐ The employee receives explanation and observes correct performance before independent practice where appropriate.
- ☐ Important quality, performance, safety and control requirements are explained before exposure to the task.
- ☐ Adequate supervised practice time is provided.
- ☐ Questions are encouraged and the trainer observes practice.
- ☐ Errors are corrected during training rather than allowed to become habits.

6. Prepare the Training Environment

- ☐ Required tools, materials, supplies and serviceable equipment are available.
- ☐ Required system accounts, login credentials, software permissions and forms are ready.
- ☐ Required PPE is available where applicable.
- ☐ Appropriate workspace is available.
- ☐ Training can occur without unreasonable interruptions.
- ☐ The employee can practice without unacceptable customer, quality, operational or safety risk.
- ☐ The trainer has adequate time and access to the employee.

QUICK CHECK

Are we asking the employee to learn the job - or to spend the first several days discovering which passwords, forms, equipment, instructions and supplies are missing? Preparation communicates that training matters.

VERIFY COMPETENCY BEFORE INDEPENDENT WORK

7. Define Competency

- ☐ Employee can explain the purpose of the task and identify required tools, materials, documents or systems.
- ☐ Critical steps can be performed in the correct sequence without omitting important requirements.
- ☐ Performance meets applicable quality, accuracy and reasonable timing expectations.
- ☐ Required safety precautions and operational controls are followed.
- ☐ Required forms or system records can be completed correctly.
- ☐ Employee can recognize common problems or exceptions.
- ☐ Employee knows what to do when normal conditions do not apply.
- ☐ Employee knows when to stop and ask for assistance.
- ☐ Escalation/reporting requirements and limits of authority are understood.

TRAINING COMPLETED DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED

Completing a training session shows that instruction occurred. Competency requires evidence that the employee can apply what was taught to the work that must actually be performed.

8. Select the Appropriate Verification Method

Possible methods: direct observation • return demonstration • practical exercise • work sample • checklist evaluation • verbal/written knowledge check • simulated scenario • supervised job performance

- ☐ The verification method matches the task being evaluated.
- ☐ The evaluator understands the required performance standard.
- ☐ Critical steps are actually observed where appropriate.
- ☐ The employee performs rather than merely describes performance when practical ability must be demonstrated.
- ☐ Required quality, safety and control requirements are evaluated.
- ☐ Deficiencies result in additional explanation, demonstration or practice.
- ☐ Re-evaluation occurs when needed.
- ☐ Competency is documented where appropriate.

Verification Method: _____

Evaluator: _____

Standard for Independent Work: _____

ATTENDANCE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF COMPETENCY

A signature showing that an employee attended training proves attendance. It does not, by itself, demonstrate that the employee understands the material or can perform the work correctly.

9. Decide When Independent Work Is Appropriate

- ☐ Required instruction and sufficient supervised practice have occurred.
- ☐ Competency has been demonstrated.
- ☐ The employee can recognize situations requiring assistance.
- ☐ Critical safety and quality expectations are understood.
- ☐ Required documentation can be completed correctly.
- ☐ The employee knows who to contact when questions arise.
- ☐ Tasks still requiring supervision are clearly identified.
- ☐ Any restrictions or additional training needs are communicated to the supervisor.

Independent Work Authorized For: _____

Additional Training / Supervision Required For: _____

REINFORCE, DOCUMENT AND IMPROVE

10. Provide Early Follow-Up

- ☐ Supervisor observes performance after initial training.
- ☐ Questions and uncertainty are addressed promptly.
- ☐ Early errors are reviewed for individual, training, documentation or process causes.
- ☐ Coaching, additional practice or retraining is provided when needed.
- ☐ Positive performance is reinforced.
- ☐ The employee knows where to go with future questions.

First Follow-Up: _____

Second Follow-Up: _____

Additional Review, if Needed: _____

11. Maintain Appropriate Training Records

- ☐ Employee, training topic/task, date and trainer are identified.
- ☐ Training material or procedure version can be identified where important.
- ☐ Competency verification method, evaluator and results are documented where appropriate.
- ☐ Deficiencies, additional training and re-evaluation are documented where appropriate.
- ☐ Required certifications, expirations or renewal dates are tracked.
- ☐ Records are maintained in the appropriate location.

DOCUMENTATION SHOULD ANSWER A PRACTICAL QUESTION

What was the employee trained to do, when did training occur, and - where necessary - how did we determine that the employee was ready to perform the work?

12. Improve the Training System

- ☐ New-employee questions and feedback are reviewed for recurring themes.
- ☐ Trainers identify unclear or outdated materials.
- ☐ Recurring employee errors are evaluated for possible training causes.
- ☐ SOP deficiencies identified during training are corrected.
- ☐ Process, equipment, software, form, system, quality or customer changes trigger training review where needed.
- ☐ Useful lessons learned are incorporated into future training.
- ☐ Trainers receive updated information when the approved process changes.

AN IMPORTANT DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

When several employees repeatedly make the same mistake, ask: Is this an employee problem - or is the process, SOP, training, tool, or performance standard unclear? Repeated errors can be evidence of a system problem, not merely individual failure.

NEW EMPLOYEE TRAINING READINESS CHECK

- ☐ We know what the employee must learn.
- ☐ We can explain what successful job performance looks like.
- ☐ Current SOPs and training materials are available.
- ☐ Required forms, systems, tools, equipment and resources are ready.
- ☐ A qualified trainer has been assigned.
- ☐ The trainer understands the approved process and expected standard.
- ☐ Training follows a defined sequence.
- ☐ The employee will have an opportunity to observe and practice.
- ☐ Important safety, quality and operational controls are incorporated.
- ☐ Competency requirements have been defined.
- ☐ We know how competency will be verified.
- ☐ Independent work will not be authorized solely because training was attended.
- ☐ Appropriate training and competency records will be maintained.
- ☐ Follow-up after initial training is planned.
- ☐ There is a method for updating training when the work changes.

READINESS PRINCIPLE

If several items remain unchecked, the organization may benefit from addressing those gaps before the employee is expected to perform independently.

Five Questions Before the New Employee Starts

1. If two different people trained this employee, would they teach substantially the same process?

If not, the underlying process or training standard may not be sufficiently defined.

2. Can we clearly explain what successful job performance looks like?

If the organization cannot define the expected result, the employee cannot reasonably be expected to consistently achieve it.

3. Do our SOPs and training materials reflect how the work should actually be performed today?

Outdated instructions can teach yesterday's process while employees are expected to perform today's work.

4. How will we know the employee can perform the work - not merely that training occurred?

Define competency before training begins.

5. Who is responsible for follow-up after formal training ends?

Someone should own the transition from training to sustained performance.

From Training to Performance

DEFINE → DOCUMENT → TRAIN → PRACTICE → VERIFY → PERFORM → IMPROVE

Define the job and standard. Document the approved process. Train consistently. Practice under supervision. Verify knowledge and performance. Perform to standard. Improve the process, documentation and training using what the organization learns.

THE MORE USEFUL QUESTION

The objective is not merely to say "The employee was trained." Ask instead: Is the employee prepared to perform the work correctly and consistently?

Continue With the ACS Resource Library

This checklist works with What Makes a Good SOP? - 10 Essential Characteristics, Small Business SOP Starter Checklist, and Small Business Process Documentation Checklist. Together, they connect PROCESS → SOP → TRAINING → PERFORMANCE.

WOULD YOU LIKE AN INDEPENDENT LOOK AT ONE OF YOUR SOPS OR TRAINING PROCESSES?

Eligible businesses may request one complimentary SOP & Training Introductory Assessment. ACS reviews one SOP, procedure, work instruction, or recurring task for clarity, completeness, usability, training support, competency, controls, and document management.

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