

Writing SOPs That Staff Actually Follow

Templates and tips for practical, compliant procedures

Article 15 of 22

5-minute read

2-4 Pages

Ideal SOP length
for routine procedures

Annual

Minimum CLIA review
frequency

6 Elements

Of competency
to document per test

SOPs are the backbone of quality in a clinical lab, yet many labs have SOPs that are outdated, overly complex, or gathering dust. An SOP nobody reads is worse than none—it creates a false sense of compliance.

1 Keep It Short and Direct

Two to four pages for a routine procedure. Plain language. If a new tech cannot perform the procedure correctly on the first read, the SOP has failed. Cut background theory.

2 Use a Consistent Structure

Every SOP: Purpose, Scope, Responsibilities, Materials, Procedure (numbered steps), Quality Control, Troubleshooting, References. Consistency means staff always know where to find information.

QUICK TIP: Use the SOP Template for a ready-made fill-in structure.

3 Write Procedures as Numbered Steps

Start each step with an action verb: Pipette, Centrifuge, Record. No narrative paragraphs. Numbered steps can be followed sequentially and pointed to exactly.

4 Include Decision Points

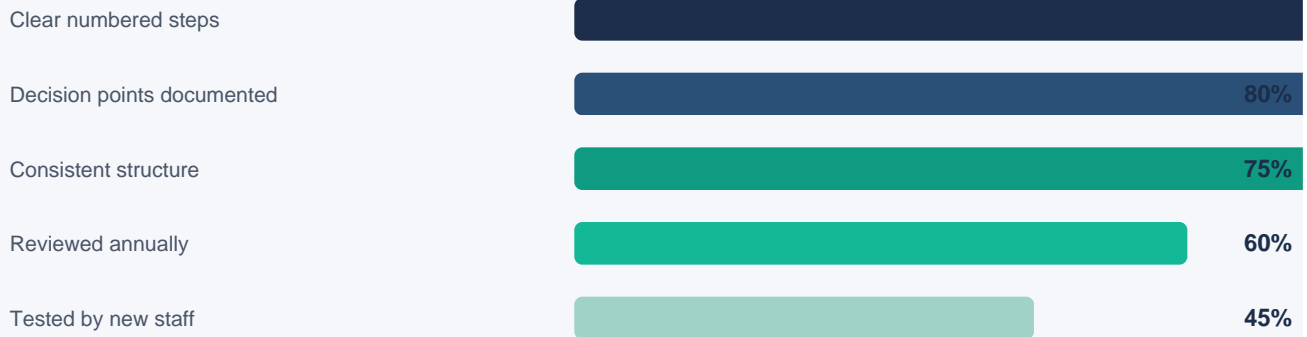
Real procedures have branches: if QC is out of range, do this. If sample is hemolyzed, do that. Document these explicitly with if/then statements.

5 Review Annually and After Every Change

CLIA requires annual review. Also revise after instrument changes, reagent changes, software updates. Date every revision and maintain a version log.

QUICK TIP: Pick your 3 most-used SOPs and rewrite them. Have a tech test each one.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SOP



Key quality indicators for effective lab SOPs

BOTTOM LINE: Pick your three most-used SOPs and rewrite them. Have a tech who was not involved try to follow each one. Their feedback tells you exactly what needs to be clearer.

FREE TOOLS TO GET STARTED

Template	What It Does
SOP Template	Fill-in-the-blank SOP format with all required sections

Download the complete JIT4LABS Templates Toolkit

23 ready-to-use Excel templates covering inventory, financials, compliance, and more.

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This is Article 15 of the **JIT4LABS Lab Operations Resource Series** — 22 practical guides for independent diagnostic labs.