

How to Write a Normal Operating Procedure

NOPs can take whatever format you choose that creates the easiest to follow process. There are three common formats:

1. **Simple Steps** – Numbered or bulleted, with short and simple sentences for explanation.
2. **Hierarchical Steps** – Numbered steps in order, with a set of steps under each numbered step.
3. **Flowchart** – Most commonly used where the NOP may have variable factors.

What should be in a NOP?

NOP Header Page

The first part of a NOP should identify the key information to enable you to review and refine your NOPs:

- What the NOP is for
- What version the document is i.e., v1.0 or v2.0
- Who wrote the NOP and when
- When it is effective from
- When the standard review dates are
- What revisions have been made, by who and when.

NOP Content

This part will outline the following:

- Purpose of the NOP
- Who is responsible for it
- Who it applies to
- The actual step by step procedure
- References to other policies or regulations that it relates to, e.g. risk assessments
- Any evaluation criteria to check effectiveness.

How to write a NOP

The following steps should help you to simply create usable NOPs that are easy to understand, simple to follow, and effective in what they achieve.

STEP 1 – Establish your end goal

This step is to define what you are trying to achieve by creating a NOP.

Example – ‘This NOP is to lock the building up securely once the session has finished’.

STEP 2 – Choose the best format

Depending on how complex the process is, you will need to decide whether to use a simple step format or a hierarchical step with sub-steps.

Example – Securely locking up the building is a simple set of steps that need to be followed in order, so the simple step format is perfect.

STEP 3 – Do the process and write the steps for the NOP

This is the actual doing. It is often easier and more effective to grab a pen and paper and do the process from end to end, recording each step as you go, rather than sitting scratching your head, trying to remember how you complete the task normally.

Example –

Task 1	Check all fire doors are closed and secured
Task 2	Check the door to the equipment cupboard is closed and locked
Task 3	Check the changing area for emptiness and cleanliness
Task 4	Check the toilets have been flushed
Task 5	Empty the bins and replace with clean bin bags
Task 6	Switch off the lights
Task 7	Close and lock the main door
Task 8	Set the intruder alarm
Task 9	Close and lock the outside door

STEP 4 – Get the NOP reviewed and agreed

This step is to make sure you haven’t missed anything. A great way to check and challenge the NOP is to ask someone to follow it exactly and make sure it does what you want it to do.

You should record who reviewed it and when.

Example – NOP reviewed by Dany Davison on 15th February.

STEP 5 – Set a review date

In the same way you would for a risk assessment, you should always have clear review dates. There are many processes that won’t change but they should still be reviewed regularly (at least annually) to ensure any changes or additions are recorded.