



What is 5S

We will attempt to answer the common question what is 5S really?

Let us start by defining 5S:

5S is a practise the results in a sustained state of workplace organization, thus eliminates the waste caused by disorganization and a messy environment. It also helps create a safer and cleaner environment, which enables better performance.

Here we will leave out the Japanese names they are based on but in English they are:

Sort

Straighten, Simplifying, Setting in order,

Shine, Sweeping, Shining, Systematic cleaning

Standardize

Sustain

What makes them different from common ideas such as spring cleaning is the last one, sustaining is what keeps the place organized.

In order to better grasp what 5s is, we will touch on each them individually.

What is Sort

Sorting is simple going through a process that divides everything in the workplace into three categories:

1. Items needed regularly that need to be in a place they can be obtained without delay. Basically ensuring that tools and parts that are needed for work being done are right by where the work is being done.
2. Items only needed occasionally. These are tools or parts that are only needed for occasional jobs, they should be put into storage out of the way and brought to work areas only just before they are needed, and when job is completed put away again. They are usually yellow tagged.
3. Items not needed anymore. These are tools or parts that will not be needed again, or are defective or broken; they should be scrapped or salvaged if possible. Usually they get red tagged.

Once everything is sorted, yellow and red tagged items should be removed from work areas. Then you are ready for the next two steps (these are often done together).

What are Straighten and Shine



Straighten simply refers to put everything neatly in its place. Identical parts with each other and put neatly into the storage place, tools organized so that they can be found instantly when needed and it becomes instantly visible if they are missing.

Shine is simply making sure everything has been properly cleaned.

Why Standardize

Standardization is making sure that everything will stay in the right place, shadow boards or the like for tools with labels to identify each tool, labelling parts storage clearly, and putting into place a plan to keep things in order.

Why Sustain

The last element of 5S is what truly keeps things in good shape. Generally until everyone is so used to keeping their area properly, organizations often use audits to check that areas are kept properly. The 5S audit forces everyone to do their part to keep the workplace clean and orderly.

Sustaining a proper state for the workplace helps maintain the productivity gains achieved by performing the other four steps.

What 5S is Not

5S is not a onetime event; rather it is constantly adjusted, as production changes overtime. It is a way of life to the Lean organization that helps keep it function properly.

5S is also not a cure all; it is simply the way to ensure that a workplace is properly organized so that workers do not have to search for what they need. Additionally 5S keeps the workplace and equipment cleaner so that less accidents and breakdowns occur.

Hopefully this simple introduction to 5S will answer the question What is 5S for you.