



# 5S

## AN ESSENTIAL LEAN TOOL

# 5S METHODOLOGY: WHAT IT IS AND ITS BENEFITS

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You know your job is a lot easier if you approach it in an organized manner, it's a fact.

Organization starts in your work area, your office in the corner, a cubicle surrounded by hundreds of other cubicles, your workstation in the production floor, your office desk, etc.

**5S** is a methodology that impulses and supports **organization of the work area** as a prerequisite to develop and implement process improvement programs like Kaizen, Six Sigma, Lean, Theory of Constraints, etc.

## 5S

- Is one of the most powerful lean manufacturing tools
- Constitutes a fundamental step for the successful implementation of any process improvement program.
- It is an efficient and safe manner to increase productivity
- Ensures the introduction of standardized working.
- Aims to introduce standard operational practices to ensure efficient, repeatable, safe ways of working through common sense organization.
- Provides a highly visual workplace. It makes problems immediately obvious.

It is a team run process and should be conducted by the people who work within the area in which the principles of **5S** are being applied, it is not a tool that can be applied by an outsider onto an area without the knowledge and cooperation of the people within it.

**5S** principles are designed to help you be organized and make it easier for you to do your job.

As a name for the methodology, **5S** is derived from five Japanese words that begin with the letter S and translate to five English words that, coincidentally, also begin with the letter S.

These words are:

**Sort (seiri (整理))** - Determine what is needed for you to do your job and remove anything that is not needed. This applies to a factory as well as each workstation. It applies to an entire office building as well as each cubicle and desk.

**Set in order (seiton (整頓))** - After you have sorted out what you need, the next practice is to set in order. Arrange materials and tools so that they are easy to find when needed. Sometime the word **Straighten** is used instead of **Set in order**.

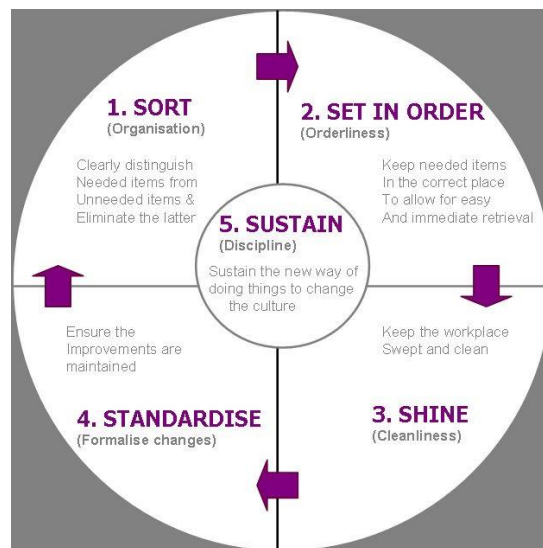
**Shine (seisō (清掃))** - Keep the work area neat and clean. It is much easier to spot safety problems or maintenance issues in a clean and organized area.

**Standardize (seiketsu (清潔))** - Standardize these practices (Sort, Set in Order, Shine) so that they



become the normal way things are done in your company. In fact, you should establish standard procedures for sort, set in order, and shine. Many lean companies extend this practice to all their general processes so that regular activities are standardized across all departments. The US Military for example provides a written standard operating procedures manual for all its members. The last practice of five S is to sustain these standard procedures through training and communication.

**Sustain (*shitsuke* (躰))** - You work constantly to improve these practices. Day in, day out. Here training is expanded to reach all members of the organization, an audit process is set in motion to ensure processes and best practices of **5S** are being followed, receive input from workers and determine if more improvements are possible, and identify the causes of any issue that might come up and implement the changes necessary to stop recurrence.



### Step by step 5S Methodology

Remember, most lean companies believe that 5S is the starting point of any continuous improvement program.

**5S** helps you to work faster, better, and more accurately. The practice of **5S** is intended to help reduce errors throughout the organization and that's where these practices align with lean management philosophy.

Using **5S** a machine operator in the factory is less likely to make a processing error. With less rework and scrap incidents, process inventory is reduced. An organized purchasing department is less likely to buy the wrong material or the wrong amount of material from suppliers. An organized shipping department is less likely to send out the wrong order.

Although most people associate the **5S** practice with factory operations, they can and are applied to every part of any organization and the results include:

- Lower inventory levels
- Better inventory control
- Reduced execution time
- Less errors
- Makes work easier

- Allows for early identification of potential problems
- Prepares the way for the implementation of successful process improvement plans

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