

# Policy & procedure writing standards checklist

Article: *How to write a policy and procedure*

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## 1. Define a clear and specific document title

Each policy or procedure should have a title that accurately reflects its content and purpose. This is usually set by the author in consultation with governance teams. Vague or generic titles make documents harder to find and reduce their perceived authority.

## 2. State the purpose of the document

The purpose section should explain why the policy or procedure exists and what it aims to achieve. This is typically written by compliance, HR, or operational leaders. Without a clear purpose, readers struggle to understand the importance of the document.

## 3. Define the scope and applicability

Clearly state which employees, departments, locations, or situations the document applies to. This is usually agreed with HR and management. Unclear scope leads to inconsistent interpretation and enforcement.

## 4. Provide definitions for key terms

Any technical, legal, or organisation-specific terms should be explained. Authors and subject matter experts normally supply these definitions. Without clear definitions, staff may misinterpret critical requirements.

## 5. Outline roles and responsibilities

Specify who is responsible for implementing, monitoring, and enforcing the policy. This is normally developed with line managers and compliance teams. Missing responsibilities create accountability gaps.

## 6. Structure the document using consistent headings

Policies and procedures should follow a standard structure with predictable sections. Governance teams often provide templates for this. Inconsistent layouts make documents harder to read and compare.

## 7. Write procedures in clear, step-by-step format

Procedures should be presented as logical, sequential actions that staff can follow in real situations. This is usually written with input from operational teams. Vague instructions reduce usability and increase error rates.

## 8. Use plain, unambiguous language

Language should be simple, direct, and free from unnecessary jargon. Authors and reviewers are responsible for clarity. Complex wording discourages reading and leads to misunderstanding.

## 9. Reference related policies and procedures

Cross-reference supporting documents so readers can access full context. Governance administrators normally manage these links. Without references, documents become isolated and incomplete.

## 10. Include compliance and regulatory references

Where relevant, policies should cite applicable laws or standards. Compliance and legal teams usually provide this input. Missing references weaken regulatory defensibility.

## 11. Record authorship and approval details

The document should show who wrote it, who approved it, and when. This is typically managed through document properties. Without this information, accountability is unclear.

## 12. Apply version numbers and change history

Each revision should be assigned a new version and include a summary of changes. This is usually maintained by administrators. Without change histories, staff cannot track what has been updated.

### 13. Insert review and expiry dates

Every document should specify when it will next be reviewed or retired. Governance teams normally set this. Missing dates lead to long-term stagnation.

### 14. Validate content with subject matter experts

Drafts should be reviewed by experts in the relevant area. This ensures accuracy and practicality. Skipping validation increases the risk of flawed guidance.

### 15. Test procedures in real working conditions

Where possible, procedures should be trialled in operational environments. Managers usually coordinate this. Untested procedures often fail in practice.

### 16. Finalise formatting and accessibility

Ensure documents meet accessibility standards and are easy to read on different devices. IT and communications teams often assist. Poor formatting reduces adoption.