Warehouse SOP Template

A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a documented, step-by-step instruction for performing a warehouse task the same way every time. Use this template to write a warehouse SOP for any task in your operation, from receiving and putaway to picking, packing, dispatch, cycle counting, and returns. Replace the prompts in each section with your own detail, then have it reviewed and approved before use.

How to use it: fill in the header, complete each section, and keep the revision history up to date. Keep each SOP to a single task, an SOP covering all warehouse operations becomes a manual nobody reads mid-shift. You can print and complete this on paper, or build the same SOP as a digital checklist in GoAudits so staff complete it on mobile with photos, timestamps, and an audit trail.

SOP header

SOP title		**SOP number**	
Version		**Effective date**	
Prepared by		**Review date**	
Approved by		**Department / zone**	

1. Purpose

State why this SOP exists and what it should achieve (for example, to verify physical stock matches the WMS record so discrepancies are caught before they affect order fulfilment).

2. Scope

Define where and to whom the SOP applies: the tasks, zones, shifts, and roles it covers, and anything it does not.

3. Responsibilities

List who performs the task, who supervises it, and who verifies it was done correctly (for example, inventory controller, shift supervisor, warehouse manager).

4. Definitions

Explain any terms, abbreviations, or system names a new starter would not recognise (for example, SKU, FIFO, WMS, ASN, tolerance).

5. Equipment and materials

List everything needed to perform the task: handheld scanners, WMS access, pallet trucks, labels, PPE, and any forms or logs.

6. Procedure (step by step)

Write each action as a short, numbered step in the order it happens. Use instructions rather than descriptions: "Scan the pallet label before moving the pallet" rather than "pallets are scanned before movement." Add a photo or diagram wherever a step is easier to show than describe.

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____

7. Verification and records

State what gets checked, by whom, how often, and what record the task produces (for example, the supervisor reviews all variances daily; the count session produces a record of bins counted and adjustments authorised).

8. Exceptions and escalation

Describe what to do when something does not match the procedure: the immediate action, who to notify, and within what timeframe.

9. Records retained

List the records this SOP produces and where they are kept (for example, count sheets, variance reports, adjustment approvals).

10. Revision history

Version	Date	Description of change	Approved by
1.0		Initial version	

Worked Example: Cycle Counting SOP

This filled example shows how the template looks in practice for a common warehouse task. Use it as a model, then adapt the detail to your own zones, systems, and tolerances.

SOP title	Cycle counting, bin level	**SOP number**	WH-INV-004
Version	1.0 (eff. 01 / 09 / 2026)	**Department / zone**	Inventory control, zones A to D

1. Purpose

To verify physical stock matches the WMS record at bin level, so discrepancies are identified and corrected before they affect order fulfilment.

2. Scope

Applies to all pick-face and reserve bins across zones A to D. Does not cover full physical inventory counts, which follow SOP WH-INV-007.

3. Responsibilities

Inventory controllers perform counts. The inventory supervisor reviews discrepancies above tolerance and authorises adjustments. The warehouse manager approves any adjustment above the agreed value threshold.

6. Procedure (step by step)

1. Pull the day's count list from the WMS. Do not select bins manually.
2. Confirm the zone is not being picked during the count window.
3. Scan the bin location barcode to open the count record.
4. Count physical units, including partial cases. Count, do not estimate.
5. Enter the counted quantity. Do not view the system quantity before entering.
6. If the count matches, close the record and move to the next bin. If not, recount once before recording a variance.
7. Record the variance with a photo of the bin as found.
8. Escalate any variance above tolerance to the supervisor before adjusting, then complete all remaining bins before closing the session.

7. Verification and records

The supervisor reviews all variances daily. The count session produces a record showing bins counted, variances found, and adjustments authorised.

8. Exceptions and escalation

If a bin is inaccessible, blocked, or mislabelled, record it as an exception rather than skipping it, and notify the supervisor the same shift.