Factory Shift Handover

1. Purpose and scope

Every shift starts knowing what the last shift left behind: machine status, open orders and unresolved issues. This SOP sets the order of the handover so that nothing is passed on by memory alone.

Item	Detail
Applies to	Factories, workshops and assembly lines that run more than one shift
Done by	Outgoing and incoming shift supervisors
Owner	Plant head or production manager
Time target	Set by the production manager for each line
Review	Every 6 months and after any missed handover

2. The steps

1. **Arrive early.** The incoming supervisor reaches the line at the time the plant sets, before the outgoing shift leaves.
2. **Walk the line together.** Both supervisors look at every machine and note its status. Handover happens at the line with both supervisors present.
3. **Read the register aloud.** The outgoing supervisor reads the entries for production count, open orders, quality holds and breakdowns.
4. **Say safety and quality issues first.** Anything that affects the safety of people or the quality of the product is stated before routine items, as per your plant procedure.
5. **Hand over machines in repair.** Say which machines are down, who was called and what was already tried.
6. **Hand over materials and tools.** Cover the material stock at the line, the tools issued and any items on hold.
7. **Confirm the open orders.** For each order state the quantity done and the quantity left. Add the delivery date.
8. **Sign the register.** Both supervisors sign with the time. The incoming supervisor owns the line from that signature.
9. **Brief the crew.** The incoming supervisor tells the team the plan for the shift and the open issues in 5 minutes.

3. Shift handover checklist

Print this, keep it on the supervisor’s desk and tick it for every handover during the first two weeks.

- ☐ Incoming supervisor arrived before the outgoing shift left
- ☐ Line walked together
- ☐ Register entries read aloud
- ☐ Safety and quality issues stated first
- ☐ Machines down and repairs handed over
- ☐ Materials and tools handed over
- ☐ Open orders and delivery dates confirmed
- ☐ Both supervisors signed with the time
- ☐ Crew briefed
- ☐ Open issues written for the next handover

4. Where this can break

Any SOP template lists the steps. These are the points where a busy shift can slip, with a simple fix for each.

Where it breaks	What happens	The fix
Handover by phone	The outgoing supervisor leaves early and the update goes by a call or a text. Details can be lost.	Handover happens at the line with both supervisors present.
Register filled late	Entries can be written from memory at the end of the shift. A breakdown or a hold can be missed.	Write each entry when the event happens.
Safety issue said last	A safety or quality issue mentioned at the end can be forgotten in the rush.	Read safety and quality items first.
Repair history lost	The next shift can repeat a fix that already failed.	The register records what was tried and who was called.
Unclear ownership	A problem appears between shifts and each supervisor says it began in the other shift.	Ownership passes at the signature with the time.
Crew not briefed	Operators can learn the plan from each other and the targets can differ from line to line.	A 5-minute briefing at the start of every shift.

5. How to roll it out in 3 days

A new SOP fails when it is just handed over. This order gets the supervisors using it within a week.

Day	What happens	Who
Day 1	30-minute walkthrough with all supervisors, using last week's register entries. Ask them what was missed at the last handover.	Plant head
Day 2	Watch one handover on each line. Fix the two biggest gaps, using Section 4.	Plant head
Day 3	Checklist goes on the supervisor's desk. At closing, the production manager checks 10 random handover entries against it.	Manager and supervisors

After that, a 5-minute check of 10 handovers once a week is enough to keep it working.

6. BEYOND the Checklist

This SOP works on the day it is introduced. Three months later, a new supervisor has joined and learned the handover from whoever was on the line. Teams change over time, so a written SOP needs three things it can't do by itself:

- **A 2-minute training video** of the handover walk, in the language staff speak, so every new joiner learns the same way on day one.
- **A local-language version** of the checklist.
- **A weekly 5-minute check** that someone actually owns.

Your own process: if your plant runs handover differently from this one, a 2-minute WhatsApp voice note on how it works today is enough. A written SOP in this same format comes back within 48 hours, at no cost. WhatsApp: +91 98101 41173 (India) | +250 799 524 457 (Rwanda)

Free Manufacturing SOP 02 by Visionhunt. One series: each SOP covers a different business, from healthcare to manufacturing. Free to use, copy and adapt. This is a general template for the process prepared by a communication and training company and not by a safety or engineering authority. The safety rules come from your own plant procedures and local law. Have your plant head review it before you adopt it.