

Place-Keeping: Know Where to Resume

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Why this matters

An unfinished step can look finished after a phone call, a delay or a handoff. A reliable place record distinguishes what is complete, what is underway and what remains. It helps the next decision, but it does not prove the physical work is correct. The record and the actual task state must agree.

Objective: Use the procedure's approved completion marks and resolve a partly completed or uncertain step before selecting the next action.

Key hazards or failure points

Signing ahead; marking several steps from memory; omitted substeps; unrecorded branches; copied initials; unreadable corrections; two inconsistent working copies; repeating an action because its status is unclear.

Practical controls

- Use the current authorized procedure and its required place-keeping method. Know what counts as complete, including required results or checks. A bookmark or cursor position alone may not establish completion.
- Record completion at the prescribed point after the required work and checks. Keep incomplete, in-progress or not-applicable status distinct under the approved process. Do not invent marks that the next person cannot interpret.
- After interruption or handoff, reconcile the recorded position with the actual task state using the authorized safe method. Preserve discrepancies and obtain required help before choosing a restart point.

Verify It in the Field

Use a training copy of a short task with several parts and no hazardous action. Ask the worker to demonstrate when completion is recorded and how an unfinished part is shown. Compare the marks with the approved rules; do not mark a live record as a practice exercise.

Pause the paper exercise during a step, then ask another person to identify what is complete, what remains uncertain and the proposed next step. Resolve different interpretations through the procedure. Record the actual ambiguity and improvement owner rather than scoring the worker's memory.

For real work, the authorized person compares one selected completion entry with its required evidence through a safe check. Record the procedure/revision, step, evidence, checker and time. Keep the affected sequence held if the entry and actual condition disagree.

Stop and reassess

Pause for an uncertain last completed step, a missing required result, inconsistent records or a changed instruction. Do not repeat, skip or backfill a step to make the sheet look complete. The responsible authority resolves the status and required rechecks before restart.

Ask the crew

1. What must be true before this step can be marked complete?
2. How do we show a partly completed step?
3. Who resolves a difference between the record and the actual condition?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009 Vol. 2, pp. 29–30; HSE Procedures. Full references and scope: webpage..

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/procedure-place-keeping-safe-restart

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