

Run the Shift Free Tools

A practical operating toolkit for **Run the Shift Before It Runs You**
The Restaurant Manager's Daily Control System

Five tools. One management rhythm.

These tools are designed to help a restaurant manager see the condition of the operation earlier, make exceptions visible, assign ownership, and carry useful information forward from one shift to the next. They are not meant to replace temperature logs, prep sheets, POS reports, waste records, schedules, or other detailed systems. They sit above those systems and help management decide where attention belongs.

The objective is simple: know what should be happening, verify what is actually happening, and act while useful choices still exist.

Included in this package

1	Daily Manager Control Sheet	The one-page dashboard for the operating day.
2	Manager Walk Checklist	A structured first look at the building, food, people, equipment, and readiness.
3	Closing Control & Tomorrow Readiness	Turns closing into inventory, rotation, cost control, and preparation for tomorrow.
4	Manager Handoff Log	A practical fifteen-minute transfer of information, ownership, and next actions.
5	Weekly Control Review	Turns daily exceptions into patterns, causes, corrective actions, and verification.

How the five tools work together

The Manager Walk creates situational awareness before service. The Daily Manager Control Sheet becomes the one-page dashboard for the shift. Closing Control converts the end of service into usable information for tomorrow. The Manager Handoff Log transfers what still matters to the next manager. The Weekly Control Review looks backward just far enough to identify what keeps repeating and what deserves a system correction.

A tool is useful only when it changes management behavior. Do not complete these forms after the fact simply to prove that someone filled them out. Use them while decisions can still improve the shift.

1. Daily Manager Control Sheet

Use this as the operating dashboard for the day. It should take only a few minutes to establish before service and should remain available during the shift. The detailed proof stays in the underlying systems; this page records the condition, important exceptions, ownership, and next action.

Before service

Complete the manager walk first. Check readiness, food-safety controls, prep, HOTS items, labor deployment, reservations, and equipment. Do not copy detailed readings onto this sheet; write only the exception that matters.

During service

Use the sheet when the direction of the shift changes. Record a meaningful station problem, unusual product shortage, guest-recovery issue, labor move, or capacity problem only when management needs to remember or follow up.

Cost / cash / loss exceptions

Capture what deserves management attention: meaningful waste, overproduction, remakes, comps, refunds, voids, cash variance, or an unusual approval pattern. A normal transaction does not need to live here.

Closing / tomorrow

Record the few items that will matter after the shift ends: carryover, pars, prep changes, purchasing needs, maintenance, and anything that must survive the manager change.

Open items

Every open issue gets an owner, next action, due time, and verification. If an item has no owner, it does not have a management plan.

Use the tool in the package as written for the first few shifts. After that, adapt only what the operation genuinely needs. Keep the system short enough that managers will still use it on the busiest day of the week.

2. Manager Walk Checklist

The manager walk is not a ceremonial inspection. Its purpose is to understand the actual condition of the restaurant before the shift becomes too busy to think clearly. Walk with your eyes open, not with the intention of simply checking boxes.

Start outside the office

Look at what the guest and the team will experience: entrance, host stand, dining room, bar, restrooms, lighting, music, and general readiness.

Move into the kitchen

Look at food-safety readiness, labeling, storage, sanitation, equipment behavior, prep levels, pars, and the HOTS list. Physically verify important items instead of accepting a reassuring answer.

Look at people

Headcount alone is not labor control. Ask whether the right capability is in the right place for the business expected.

Finish with priorities

Write only the three priorities most likely to affect the shift. This keeps the walk from becoming another inspection that produces no management action.

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3. Closing Control & Tomorrow Readiness

Closing is not a punishment shift and it should not be reduced to cleaning. A strong close protects food, money, information, equipment, and tomorrow's readiness. Cleaning remains important, but it belongs inside a wider management process.

Product and rotation

Count critical carryover, rotate usable product, distinguish use-now from carry-forward, and make deliberate discard decisions. Record overproduction instead of hiding it.

Tomorrow's prep

Update pars, prep quantities, HOTS items, ordering needs, and special-event requirements while the information is fresh.

Equipment and financial control

Carry forward equipment concerns, close the POS/cash process under the operation's rules, review unusual approvals or variances, and secure the restaurant.

Tomorrow's readiness

Write what the next manager should not have to rediscover. Every item should have an owner and a next action.

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4. Manager Handoff Log

The handoff is a short professional conversation, not a baton pass. Fifteen thoughtful minutes can prevent the incoming manager from spending the first hour rediscovering things the restaurant already knows.

What changed

Focus on what is different from normal: volume, staffing, product, guest issues, equipment, maintenance, or an unusual financial exception.

What has already been done

Pass progress, not mysteries. Explain calls made, product moved, temporary controls, guest contact, and what has already been verified.

What happens next

Name the owner, next action, timing, and verification. 'Someone needs to call maintenance' is not a handoff.

The final question

Before the outgoing manager leaves, ask: What would the incoming manager be angry to discover by accident? If the answer exists, discuss it now.

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5. Weekly Control Review

The weekly review is where daily control becomes management intelligence. One event may be normal restaurant life. Repetition is information. Use the review to separate isolated exceptions from upstream system problems.

Count repeated exceptions

Tally prep/HOTS problems, guest recovery, waste, remakes, comps, voids, labor problems, equipment issues, and open handoff items by day.

Look upstream

When something repeats, ask what is driving it: par levels, counts, training, workflow, menu design, schedule, maintenance, purchasing, or unclear ownership.

Correct proportionately

Do not create a new form or policy after every single mistake. Make the smallest correction that addresses the real cause.

Verify

Assign an owner and due date, then confirm the change worked. Corrective action is not complete merely because someone did something.

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Implementation Notes

Introduce the tools as management aids, not as disciplinary evidence. Honest exceptions are more useful than perfect-looking paperwork. If managers believe a form exists to catch them doing something wrong, the information will become safer and less truthful.

Keep detailed records in the systems where they belong. The Daily Manager Control Sheet should point to the temperature log, waste record, POS report, maintenance record, or prep sheet when detail is needed. It should not duplicate all of them.

Review the first two weeks of use with the managers who actually run shifts. If everyone writes the same note in the margin, give that information a proper place. If an entire section never produces useful action, ask whether it belongs. Forms should be managed too.

Important operating note

These tools are educational operating resources. They do not replace jurisdiction-specific food-safety records, labor requirements, financial controls, security procedures, or company policies. Adapt them to your operation and the standards that apply where you work.

Companion resource

Run the Shift Before It Runs You
The Restaurant Manager's Daily Control System

Free tools and updates: <https://chefdavidarnold.com/run-the-shift-free-tools/>