# Audit whether critical controls are actually followed

**Observe a critical control at the work, record objective evidence and verify the response while keeping audit-completion metrics distinct from product quality.**

## Eight checks completed, two findings, no product-quality percentage

Fictional case: ten process checks were scheduled across leadership layers at Vale Assembly. Eight were completed and two findings recorded. These values remain unchanged in the core diagram. Supervisor Priya must report the results and follow an absent identity check through containment, action and a later observation.

## Your role and the reference condition

Layered-audit coordinator and process leaders
Normal: Questions target specific critical controls, observers inspect actual work/records and findings reach an accountable response with verification.
Gap: The dashboard labels 80% completion as 80% quality and closes findings when a reminder email is sent.

## Work within these conditions

1. Layered process checks are not a substitute for product inspection or a certification audit.

2. Cadence, questions and roles must fit the process and applicable requirements; this is not a copied CQI-8 form.

Fictional teaching case. Supplied observations support the exercise; proposed actions are not verified customer results.

# See how the method works

A layered process audit checks execution of important controls through planned observation by defined roles. Choose specific questions tied to process risks, then decide how evidence is recorded and what happens when a control is absent or ineffective. The purpose is to detect and correct weaknesses in routine execution, not to substitute for product inspection or a full management-system audit. Review completion, findings, action effectiveness and recurring patterns as different measures. A high completion percentage can coexist with poor observations, and a low finding count can reflect superficial checks. Use learning to improve both the process and the audit questions without turning the routine into blame.

### 01 Critical-control questions

Choose specific questions tied to critical process controls.

### 02 Roles + cadence

Assign leadership layers, cadence and response responsibilities.

### 03 Observe evidence

Observe work and record objective evidence.

### 04 Act + verify

Contain findings and verify effective action.

### 05 Review effectiveness

Review completion, finding patterns and effectiveness separately.

## Read every connection

1. Step 1 > 2
Continue with the next action

2. Step 2 > 3
Continue with the next action

3. Step 3 > 4
Continue with the next action

4. Step 4 > 5
Continue with the next action

5. Step 5 > 1
Verify and repeat

Method exhibit: Critical-control questions, Roles + cadence, Observe evidence, Act + verify, Review effectiveness.

# Follow the evidence and decisions

## Inspect the supplied case inputs

| Measure or finding | Fictional evidence |
|---|---|
| Scheduled / completed checks | 10 /8 |
| Findings among completed checks | 2 |
| Example finding | Current product identity not checked before setup |
| Initial action | Leader restores required check and reviews exposure |
| Effectiveness | Later observation still needed |

### 01 / Choose an observable control question

Priya replaces "Does the team care about quality?" with a question about whether the current product identity is checked against the setup instruction. The observer must see the work or its required record.

Why: A specific question can produce objective evidence. An opinion question encourages easy yes answers without testing the control.

Evidence / check: The question names the control, evidence and relevant operating moment.

### 02 / Assign layers and response ownership

Different leadership roles observe the critical control at planned opportunities. Priya identifies who responds to an abnormality and who removes a system obstacle.

Why: Layers provide different perspectives and authority; repeatedly collecting signatures without an action path does not strengthen the control.

Evidence / check: The schedule names observers, opportunity and receiving owner.

### 03 / Record what was actually seen

One observer records that setup proceeded without the required product-identity check, with time and relevant record reference. Another finding remains a separate evidence item.

Why: The finding should be reproducible and bounded. "Operator careless" is a causal judgment that the observation alone does not establish.

Evidence / check: Two objective findings are retained rather than merged into a general score.

### 04 / Calculate separate process metrics

Completion is 8/10=80%. Finding rate among completed checks is 2/8=25%. Priya labels both denominators and avoids interpreting either as percentage conforming product.

Why: The measures concern the audit activity and its observations. They do not estimate product quality or prove that the underlying control is effective.

Evidence / check: The dashboard names scheduled-check completion and findings per completed check.

### 05 / Close through evidence of response

The owner handles immediate exposure, investigates why the identity step was missed and corrects the relevant process. A later observed opportunity checks whether the intended control now works.

Why: Sending a reminder is an action, not effectiveness evidence. The review must distinguish restoration now from prevention of the recurring gap.

Evidence / check: Closure references the later observation and any remaining system issue.

# Completed layered-check response record

| Record | Result | Decision |
|---|---|---|
| Completion | 8/10=80% | Two planned checks remain unperformed |
| Finding rate | 2/8=25% | Two findings among actual checks |
| Identity finding | Check absent at setup | Immediate response and exposure review |
| Effectiveness | Future observation required | Reminder alone does not close |

### All scheduled checks are signed on one afternoon

The log shows every leader completed the week's planned observations at the same quiet moment.

### Decision

Review whether the planned operating opportunities were actually covered and correct the observation plan. Preserve the true timing rather than backdating entries.

### Reasoning

A perfect completion count can miss the conditions where a control is most likely to fail. The schedule should support representative observation.

### What would change the decision?

The review records actual opportunities and gaps in coverage.

# Practise with a changed case

## A changed audit week

New fictional week has 12 planned checks,9 completed and 3 findings. One finding was marked closed after an email, with no later observation.

| Item | Count/status |
|---|---|
| Planned | 12 |
| Completed | 9 |
| Findings | 3 |
| Closed-by-email item | No effectiveness evidence |

## Your task

1. Calculate completion and finding rate with labelled denominators.
2. Write an objective finding and a verification plan for the premature closure.
3. Explain what the percentages do not establish.

Use the next page to record your reasoning before reading the answer.

# Your practice worksheet

## A changed audit week

### Observation evidence

### Completion calculation

### Finding-rate calculation

### Immediate response

### Later verification

Complete your reasoning before turning to the answer. Use the separate learner workbook for group practice.

# Check your reasoning and transfer it

1. Completion 9/12=75%; findings 3/9=33.3% of completed checks. Neither is a product-conformance rate.

2. Reopen or qualify the email-only closure under the local process; identify the actual control, response and later observation needed to verify effectiveness. Preserve the action already taken without overstating what it proves.

## Suggested completed record

| Metric | Calculation | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Completion | 9/12=75% | Scheduled activity |
| Finding rate | 3/9=33.3% | Findings among checks |
| Closure | Email only | Effectiveness not established |

## Plausible wrong turns

1. More findings can reflect better observation rather than worse product.

2. A completed schedule is not proof of control effectiveness.

## Evidence of a sound answer

1. Use the correct two denominators.

2. Write evidence rather than blame.

3. Verify the response at a relevant later opportunity.

## Take the learning back to work

| Commitment | Agreed follow-through |
|---|---|
| Owner | Layered-audit coordinator and process owner |
| Record | Observation schedule, objective findings and effectiveness record |
| Review | At planned leadership reviews and follow-up observations |
| Verification evidence | Relevant coverage and verified control response |
| If unresolved | Improve questions, access or process conditions when repeated findings or superficial checks persist. |

# Help someone else apply the method

## Prepare

1. Schedule and finding cards
2. Blank observation record
3. Role map

| Minutes | Activity and coaching prompt |
|---|---|
| 5 | Improve the question<br>What could you actually observe? |
| 8 | Interpret the two rates<br>Which population is each about? |
| 10 | Repair the email closure<br>What evidence would demonstrate the control? |
| 5 | Debrief timing<br>Which operating condition might a convenient visit miss? |

## Debrief

1. Ask learners to replace a blame phrase with an observation.
2. Do not reward low finding counts without examining observation quality.

## Individual or remote practice

Write one audit question with its expected evidence and reaction owner.

# Connect the method and check its boundaries

### Before application

1. Process-specific critical-control questions
2. Assigned roles, cadence and response

### Outside this lesson

1. Product inspection replacement
2. Full management-system certification audit

### AIAG: Layered process audits CQI-8

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Process-specific checks, cross-functional ownership and management review connect audits to meaningful performance outcomes.

Public primary-source summary; underlying paid standards/forms are not reproduced.

Open this lesson and its visual aids