

PROS USE CHECKLISTS

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The Point

A checklist does not replace skill.

It protects skill when pressure, fatigue, or interruption show up.

Pilots

Run a checklist before every takeoff — even after thousands of hours. It keeps performance consistent when the unexpected shows up.

Surgeons

Use a short pre-surgery checklist that has repeatedly cut complications. It brings the whole team onto the same page at the critical moment.

Engineers

Treat standard work and control plans as professional tools. The best process people use them to lock in quality and protect the team.

When the Checklist Was Skipped

F-15A · “Misty 1” · Whiteman AFB · November 1995

Right engine fire on final. The checklist was simple and clear:
if the fire continues after shutdown → eject.

The pilot shut the engine down, then elected to continue a high-speed approach to save the jet. He overran the runway and ejected. The aircraft was destroyed. He walked away.

This was not a lack of skill. It was a human decision under pressure. The checklist exists for exactly those moments.

Source: C.W. Lemoine HUD tape analysis

High Stakes, Simple Tools

ACTIVE SHOOTER

Run
Hide
Fight
Call 911

ON FIRE

Stop
Drop
Roll

In the Plant and the Shop

01 **Standard Work & Control Plans**

The same critical steps, done the same way, every shift.

02 **Forced Verification**

Digital or physical checks that make skipping a step visible.

03 **Near-Miss Response**

When something almost fails, the answer is a better checklist — not another memo.

04 **Ownership**

The people who do the work build and own the checklist. That is the only version that survives.

What Actually Works

Short

Only the steps that are critical and easy to miss under pressure.

Owned

Written and maintained by the people who actually do the work.

Verified

Spoken out loud or confirmed by a second person when the stakes are high.

Living

Updated every time something goes wrong or almost goes wrong.

Pros use checklists.

Not because they need the help.
Because they refuse to leave critical steps to memory and hope.

engmgt.ae4jc.com/articles/checklist-manifesto/

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