# Build a kitchen cleaning schedule staff can follow

A useful cleaning schedule names the surface, method, product, timing and person responsible, then records completion and problems.

*Practical staff guidance; adapt the suggested workflow to your venue and current procedures.*

## Break the kitchen into tasks

Walk through the work area and list distinct cleaning tasks: preparation benches, handles, sinks, equipment and storage areas. Separate tasks that happen during service from those that require a planned shutdown. State what a completed task should look like and who checks it. A clear list helps staff recognise when an item has been missed.

## Use the correct product instructions

Food-safety guidance distinguishes cleaning from disinfection. The selected method needs to suit the surface and use. Follow product instructions for dilution, contact time and any rinse requirement. Record the exact approved product so a replacement triggers a check. A generic “spray and wipe” instruction leaves too much interpretation to the person carrying out the task.

## Make the schedule usable on shift

Place the working copy where staff can consult it without contaminating food. Assign each task to a role and identify cover for breaks or absence. Include a place to record an incomplete task and the action taken. Staff should be able to ask for help when equipment, instructions or supplies are missing.

## Check the process and improve it

Review missed tasks with the team. A recurring problem may indicate poor timing, inaccessible equipment or an unrealistic workload. Update the schedule when a product, menu, piece of equipment or method changes. Use the completed record to support a conversation about the actual work, and keep the venue’s food-safety procedures as the governing instructions.

## Worked example

Fictional example: a café lists its preparation bench as a separate task, with its approved product and manufacturer’s contact time copied into the local procedure. When the product is replaced, the supervisor checks the new instructions before the schedule is used again.

## Your next steps

- List each surface or item.
- Confirm the approved method and product.
- Record product-specific instructions.
- Assign timing, owner and checker.
- Record exceptions and follow-up.

## Turn a schedule into a usable instruction

For each surface or item, state who cleans it, when, with which approved product and method, and how completion is checked. Separate routine cleaning from a response to contamination or a spill. Where disinfection is needed, include the product instructions for preparation, contact time and any rinse step. Staff need to be able to find the instruction during the shift. Check that cleaning can happen safely around food, equipment, electricity and customer movement.

## Check the difficult parts of the job

Fictional example: a slicer is recorded as cleaned, but the accessible surfaces are the only parts anyone has reached. The supervisor checks the equipment instructions, the isolation arrangements and who is trained to dismantle and reassemble it. The schedule is corrected to describe the authorised procedure and the verification. Signing a row should mean the specified task was done, rather than simply that the area looked tidy. Review repeated missed tasks for timing or staffing problems.

## Can one cleaning product be used everywhere?

Use products only for their intended applications and follow the instructions. Food-contact suitability, compatibility, required dilution and disinfection performance matter. Ask the responsible person when the label or procedure is unclear.

## Cleaning practice: the sanitised counter that got used too soon

During a busy reset, someone wipes the counter dry immediately after applying disinfectant. They say it looks clean enough to start plating. What information settles the question?

### Compare your decision

Stop plating on that surface. Check the product instructions and site procedure for cleaning steps, dilution, contact time and any rinse requirement. Repeat the appropriate process if the required conditions were missed. Use an alternative prepared surface if available.

Ask a new starter to show where the actual contact time is written. If two products look similar, add a practical check that helps staff choose the instructions for the product in their hand.

## Sources and editorial basis

- Food hygiene for businesses — Cleaning
- HSE — Safe use of cleaning substances

Guidance checked on 19 October 2026. Examples and worksheets are original suggested workflows; adapt them to your operation.

### Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details