

Gemba Before Algorithms

A language model has never seen anything. So **the assistant holds the clipboard. You go see.**



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paulducey.com/gemba
skills • deck • handout

Try it in ten minutes

- 1 Download the toolkit from paulducey.com/gemba and unzip it. Open `skills/start-here/SKILL.md`.
- 2 Copy the whole file. In `claude.ai`, make a new Project and paste it into **Project instructions**.
- 3 Start a chat. Say what's in front of you: *"a changeover that takes 47 minutes."*
- 4 It routes you to one skill. Paste that one the same way, or say **"just draft it."**
- 5 Read the tag on every number. Take the yellow ones to the floor.

Read the tags

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| [observed, 6 runs] | Counted by someone, on the floor. |
| [from system: MES] | From a named system. |
| [user estimate] | A best guess. Ask where from. |
| [ASSUMED – verify] | If it's wrong, the answer changes. |
| [NEEDS GEMBA] | The andon. Go look. |

No tag? Don't trust it.

Start like you'd start anything

- **One practitioner** who already goes to the gemba. Never the one who doesn't; you'll just get more documents.
- **One skill, one live problem, two weeks.** Not a pilot.
- **One measure: did hours at the gemba go up?** Not "did we use AI." If no, stop. It's a clipboard, not a strategy.

Watch for: the practitioner who stops going; reading the tone instead of the tags; confidential data in a chat box.

Five principles, written into every skill

- 01 Jidoka for information.** Every number carries a source tag. [NEEDS GEMBA] is the andon: nobody knows this yet, go look.
- 02 Poka-yoke for data.** A missing column gets named, never guessed. A reason code it can't map gets an explicit Unmapped row. OEE over 100% gets flagged, not printed.
- 03 Observe, don't solve.** The gemba-walk skill asks what makes a step difficult. It won't hand you a punch list.
- 04 Sensei first, draft on demand.** It coaches with a few questions, left to right on the A3. Say "just draft it" and you get a draft with every unknown marked.
- 05 Respect for people.** It frees capacity. What the organization does with that capacity is a leadership decision, and it says so. Names of employees and patients stay out; roles and initials are fine.

The drift check

Before you act on a number that moved, ask at the gemba:

- **Did the work change?** Watch it against the standard; ask the operator. → process drift
- **Did the counting change?** Walk the data path: sensor, export, reason codes. → measurement drift
- **Did the world move outside the model?** New product, supplier, season? → model drift

The seventeen skills

Plain text. MIT licensed. Free. Copy one into a Claude Project's instructions, then say what's in front of you.

YOU HAVE...	SKILL	WHAT YOU GET
No idea where to start	start-here	One question, then a hand-off to the right skill
A problem to put on one page	a3-coach	An A3, coached left to right; countermeasures after root cause
"Why does this keep happening?"	root-cause	5 Whys or fishbone, a verified cause, one corrective action
A vague complaint	problem-statement	One measurable sentence, cause and solution stripped out
A kaizen event to plan	kaizen-charter	A charter a sponsor could sign
A walk to plan or debrief	gemba-walk	A walk plan or a debrief. Never a punch list
A job to document as done today	standard-work	Takt, sequence, standard WIP, every time sourced
A job to teach	twi-jbs	A job breakdown sheet plus a training timetable
Timings and inventories from a walk	vsm-calc	Takt, lead time, PCE, bottleneck, by script
A downtime export from the MES	oee-from-csv	$A \times P \times Q$ with every formula shown, and the Six Big Losses
A workplace to score	5s-audit	A scored audit by zone with a prioritized action list
A changeover to shorten	smed-setup	Internal/external separation and a changeover plan
A measurement that varies	control-chart	Control limits, special cause, Cp/Cpk, with caveats
A process or machine to risk-assess	fmea-builder	An FMEA on explicit 1–10 scales, RPN shown
A mistake to design out	mistake-proofing	The poka-yoke hierarchy, from elimination down
"Can we hit the volume?"	capacity-planner	Station loading and what-ifs, as capacity, never headcount
Tier boards nobody looks at	daily-management	A tiered daily management design with escalation

When the dashboard is supposed to replace the walk

"The dashboard tells us where to look. It can't tell us what's true."

"Which number would change your decision? Let's go see what's behind that one."

"Give me fifteen minutes on the floor before we decide."

"Come with me. Ten minutes. Then we'll both know."

Two skills run a script

oee-from-csv and vsm-calc do their arithmetic in a script, so use Claude Code for those two.

The other fifteen work pasted into a chat. Worked examples include hospital and clinic cases.

Every skill ends with what it did, what still needs a human, and one next step: usually a person and a place on the floor.

Go see.
Let the assistant hold the clipboard.

Questions, or want to try it on your floor? [linkedin.com/in/paulducey](https://www.linkedin.com/in/paulducey) · pjducey@gmail.com



paulducey.com/gemba