

The quality gate every OKR must pass

Run this during your quality review session (Week 7 of Deploy). Any "No" means the OKR needs revision before it's published. This is not optional — it's the gate.

Objective checks

- Qualitative — no numbers in the objective**
 ✓ **Pass:** "Become the most trusted partner our customers have" | ✗ **Fail:** "Increase NPS by 20 points" (that's a KR)

- Ambitious — genuine stretch, not business-as-usual**
 ✓ **Pass:** Requires real effort and trade-offs | ✗ **Fail:** Achievable at current pace with no change

- Directional — tells teams what to prioritise this quarter**
 ✓ **Pass:** Teams can derive what to work on from it | ✗ **Fail:** "Be more innovative" — applies to any quarter

- Right altitude — specific enough to guide, broad enough for team creativity**
 ✓ **Pass:** Outcome-led, motivating, plain language | ✗ **Fail:** "Complete Q2 project" (too low) or "Be a great company" (too high)

- Named owner — a person, not a team name**
 ✓ **Pass:** "Sarah Chen owns this" | ✗ **Fail:** "The Marketing team" — no individual accountability

- Connected to strategy — you can trace the line from this objective to company priorities**
 ✓ **Pass:** Clear line of sight to a company OKR or strategic priority | ✗ **Fail:** Looks like team admin reframed as a goal

Key Result checks (run for each KR)

- Measurable — has a metric, a baseline, and a target**
 ✓ **Pass:** "NPS from 32 → 48 by end of Q2" | ✗ **Fail:** "Improve customer satisfaction"

- Outcome not output — measures change in state, not activity completed**
 ✓ **Pass:** "40% feature adoption in 8 weeks" | ✗ **Fail:** "Launch new feature by March" (that's an initiative)

- Named data owner — one person responsible for measuring and updating**
 ✓ **Pass:** Single named individual | ✗ **Fail:** Shared ownership — no one person accountable

- Confirmed data source — owner knows where the data comes from and can access it today**
 ✓ **Pass:** Named system, confirmed access, confirmed baseline | ✗ **Fail:** "We'll figure out how to measure it"

- Realistic in cycle — achievable within the quarter with available resources**
 ✓ **Pass:** Stretching but feasible | ✗ **Fail:** Depends on a project that hasn't started yet

- Supports the objective — removing this KR would leave the objective incomplete**
 ✓ **Pass:** Together the KRs fully cover the objective's scope | ✗ **Fail:** KR feels like it was added to pad the objective out

The 2-minute test: Read the objective and KRs aloud. Finish with: "So what would be different in the world if we hit all of this?" If you can't answer clearly, it needs revision. OKRs that don't change anything are documents. OKRs that change something are tools.