WORKFLOWS · PDF WORKSHEET

Workflow Failure Plan

Every automation fails sometimes. Plan it so no input gets lost, no bad output reaches a customer and someone knows when the workflow needs help.

6 SECTIONS · 18 CHECKS · PRINT AND FILL



01 Classify the failure first

FILL IN

FAILURE	EXAMPLE	FIRST RESPONSE	IN YOUR WORKFLOW
Temporary	Timeout, rate limit, service briefly down	Retry with a delay	
Bad input	Missing field, unreadable attachment	Stop and ask for the missing information	
Bad output	Wrong format, missing required section	Validate, then retry once or escalate	
Wrong answer	Plausible but incorrect content	Catch with checks or review; do not retry blindly	
Permanent	Revoked access, deleted record	Stop, alert the owner	

02 Retry with limits

5 CHECKS

- **Cap the attempts:** two or three retries, then stop.
- **Make actions safe to repeat:** check whether the first attempt worked before trying again.
- **Read the error first:** rate limits and server errors can wait and retry; request, key or permission errors need a fix.
- **Wait longer each time:** backoff with a little randomness spreads retries out.
- **Retry in one place:** know which layer retries (SDK, automation tool) so attempts do not multiply.

03 Validate outputs before they move on

5 CHECKS

- **Required fields and format** are all present.
- **Records** referenced by the output actually exist.
- **A failed check** is a failure: retry once with the error noted, then escalate.
- **Numbers** are within a sensible range.
- **Business rules** were followed, such as "never offer a discount over 10%".

Structured output modes reduce format failures, but they do not check whether the content is correct.

04 Never lose an item

4 CHECKS

- **Fall back to something reliable:** a simpler model, a template reply or a person.
- **Every item has an ID** and a recorded status at each step.
- **A "needs attention" queue** for anything that could not be completed, checked daily by one person.
- **Where is item 1042 right now?** If you cannot answer, the workflow is not ready.

05 Alert the right person

4 CHECKS

- **Send to the owner** through a channel they actually check.
- **Group routine failures** into a daily summary, not one message each.
- **Alert at once** on revoked access, a queue growing faster than it is cleared or a step that stopped.
- **Silence is a signal.** An hourly workflow that goes quiet for a day is broken upstream.

06 Test the failure paths before launch

PASS / FAIL

BREAK IT ON PURPOSE	LANDS IN THE QUEUE WITH A REASON	RIGHT PERSON TOLD	CONTINUES WITHOUT STARTING OVER
Revoke a test key			
Submit a form with a missing field			
Send an attachment it cannot read			
Simulate a timeout			

Repeat these tests whenever you change a step, a model or a connected tool.

NEXT STEP

Workflow automation services

www.doitwithfriday.com/services/workflows/

Build with Friday →

BASED ON FRIDAY FIELD NOTES

www.doitwithfriday.com/blog/ai-workflow-error-handling/

www.doitwithfriday.com/blog/human-in-the-loop-ai/

General guidance, not legal or security advice for your specific setup. Questions: hello@doitwithfriday.com