

Flat-file changes. Fewer avoidable mistakes.

A practical change-control SOP for Seller Central spreadsheets, with a reusable AI skill and a review checklist.

The promise is a better review process, not an error-free upload. Amazon templates and requirements vary by marketplace, product type and operation. Your actual template and current account guidance take precedence.

Start with one bounded change

Use this kit for controlled edits to existing listings. Decide which existing SKUs and fields may change, and what must stay untouched. New products, new parents, variation repair, deletes and offer/fulfillment changes need separate scope.

Bring these five inputs

- The current template for the correct store and product type, kept untouched.
- Current SKU/ASIN mapping and the dated catalog/export source. Note missing or stale information.
- A change list: exact SKU, field, old value, new value, reason and product evidence.
- The template instructions, definitions, valid values and conditional requirements.
- A named reviewer and permission to use the selected data in the chosen AI tool.

Your review package

Keep the original, working copy or patch, cell-level diff, validation record, unresolved questions and recovery reference together. Use the included change-brief.md to make the scope concrete.

No Seller Central password, API key, customer records or account connection is needed. This kit does not upload anything or make live changes.

Protect the workbook before editing it.

A clean-looking spreadsheet can still lose the parts that make its template work.

1. Save the baseline

Keep the downloaded original unchanged. Create a dated working copy in the same file format. Record the marketplace, language, product type, download date and template version. Keep the relevant current listing/export snapshot as a separate recovery reference.

2. Preserve the template structure

- Do not delete, rename, reorder or rewrite header/metadata rows, columns or sheets.
- Preserve hidden content, formulas, named ranges, validations, dropdowns and conditional formatting.
- If the file contains macro parts, preserve them without running macros. Do not enable external links.
- Use a compatible editor. A CSV export cannot preserve workbook features. Do not rebuild the template from AI-extracted text.

3. Keep identifiers as exact text

SKU, ASIN, GTIN/UPC/EAN and parent references are identifiers, not numbers to round. Preserve leading zeros, case, punctuation and spacing. Watch for date conversion and scientific notation. Flag suspicious values; do not silently trim or repair them.

If your tool cannot prove preservation, stop at a patch. Return the proposed SKU/field/cell changes for a human to apply in the original workbook. Never label a reconstructed workbook as safely preserved.

Check before moving on

Open both copies. Confirm the expected sheets, metadata, headers and formula/validation behavior. A screenshot or extracted text alone does not establish workbook integrity.

Make only the approved changes.

Give AI a narrow job and a source for every proposed value.

4. Match the intended operation

Identify the exact action column and supported existing-listing edit/partial-update value in this template. Set it intentionally. Do not assume a blank means edit, and do not change an update into create/replace. Amazon's current U.S. guidance describes distinct edit and create/replace actions; labels and behavior must be checked in your actual file. [1]

5. Edit from evidence, not inference

- Match each row by the exact existing SKU. Do not rename a SKU or create a new one to solve an update problem.
- Use only approved facts for the exact product/variant. Never copy a competitor's attributes into your product.
- When an attribute is unknown or sources conflict, stop that edit and ask a precise question.
- Do not fill blanks or insert clearing tokens by guesswork. Confirm what a blank or clearing action does in this template.

6. Protect the variation family

Keep parent/child roles, parent links, relationship type, theme and variation dimensions unchanged unless a separate plan explicitly covers them. Category-specific themes and allowed relationships vary. [3] Never automatically Delete, detach, reparent, delete-and-recreate or add a new parent.

Keep collateral fields out of scope. Price, quantity, fulfillment, shipping settings and additional marketplaces stay untouched unless explicitly approved. A content edit must not quietly become an offer change.

Use SKILL.md as portable instructions in your approved AI tool. It must report what it read, what it changed and what it could not check.

Review the diff. Then review the file.

Two separate checks: did the right values change, and did the real workbook survive?

7. Validate against this template

- Check required and conditionally required fields for each row and operation. Inspect red/required indicators where present, but do not use color as the only rule source.
- Check allowed values, types, lengths, units, URLs and dependencies against the current definitions and valid-values guidance.
- Confirm existing identifiers and family relationships match the baseline. Check distinct child dimensions; do not introduce duplicate combinations.

8. Account for every change

Review a complete SKU/field diff showing old value, new value, evidence and reason. Reconcile the intended SKU set and row counts. Any additions, removals or reordering must be intentional and explained. An actual upload may use a deliberate subset; do not confuse that selection with a missing-row error.

9. Reopen the saved workbook

Check the actual saved file, not only an export. Verify string identifiers, headers, formulas, validations and any macro parts remain intact. Record PASS, FAIL or NOT CHECKED honestly. A critical unchecked item blocks handoff.

Optional checker: useful, but deliberately limited. `snapshot_check.py` checks a declared before/after TSV review contract. It cannot inspect workbook internals, validate all Amazon rules, verify product facts or approve an upload.

Human approval gate

The account owner reviews the exact final file version and decides whether to upload it. Draft approval is not upload approval. Keep unresolved questions visible rather than hiding them behind a green check.

Close the loop after processing.

An upload receipt is not proof that the intended listing state is correct.

10. Keep the submission record

After the owner-controlled upload, save the exact uploaded file, submission/batch ID and processing report. Reconcile requested, processed and successful SKUs. Inspect warnings as well as errors. Match by SKU and the report's actual mapping; do not assume a fixed row-number offset across template versions. [2]

11. Verify the outcome

Check the intended fields, offer and variation state in Seller Central and on the live detail page after processing. Investigate differences. Propose a narrow correction and review it before resubmission. Do not automatically resend the full file or undo changes.

A backup is a recovery reference, not a one-click undo. Re-uploading an old full file can overwrite newer work or fail to reverse every effect. Review any recovery action against current catalog state.

Try the fictional example first

The included snapshot changes one blue child's title. It preserves its leading-zero identifier, parent link, theme and the other child. The checker blocks an unapproved edit, lost leading zero, new SKU, Delete action or changed relationship. These files are not Amazon templates. Never upload them.

Official references

- [1] [Amazon: Build your inventory file \(G581\)](#)
- [2] [Amazon: bulk templates and processing reports \(1641\)](#)
- [3] [Amazon: variation FAQs \(G201951410\)](#)

Checked October 20, 2026 using current searchable official guidance. Some pages require sign-in. Recheck in-account instructions. See SOURCES.md for full links and access notes. This SOP covers Seller Central spreadsheets, not deprecated legacy Feeds API flat-file/XML listing uploads. Independent AMZAdvantage guidance; no Amazon affiliation or acceptance guarantee.