



PRACTICAL SYSTEMS FOR ENGINEERS

The RA Bill Playbook

The folder, the monthly order of work, and six checks to run before the bill leaves your desk.

Who this is for

A billing or QS engineer on the contractor side, running RA bills in Excel, on a project with no full ERP system.

If you already have a system that does all of this, you do not need this book.

What you get

By the end you will have three things:

- A folder that holds every paper the bill depends on.
- One fixed order of work for every month.
- Six checks that catch most mistakes **before** the bill goes out.

How this book is written

Plain English. Short sentences. The parts are numbered **Part 1** to **Part 9**, and when one part points to another, it says so in words.

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ABOUT THE NUMBERS IN THIS BOOK

Every figure, project and drawing number here is made up for teaching. Nothing comes from a real project, a real client or a real company.

Part 1 • Before RA-1: the folder

Most billing trouble starts here. The folder usually gets made halfway through RA-3, when nobody has time. Make it on day one instead. It takes an hour.

FOLDER	WHAT GOES INSIDE
00-contract	PO, agreement, BOQ as awarded, rate schedule, special conditions
01-drawings	GFC drawings only, by revision. Old ones move to a superseded folder
02-measurements	MB sheets, JMRs, joint measurement photos, site instructions
03-bills	One folder per cycle
RA-01, RA-02 ...	Abstract, bill, covering letter, annexures — as submitted
certified	What came back certified, cycle by cycle
04-amendments	PO amendments, NS item approvals, rate approvals, deviation orders
05-reconciliation	Material issued and used — steel, cement
06-registers	Hindrance and rain log, JMR register, drawing register , correspondence log
07-payments	Invoice tracker , invoices raised, payments received, TDS and GST records



THE ONE EVERYBODY SKIPS

The **certified** folder. If you only keep what you sent, you have no record of what was cut, or why. Six months later, when you raise a claim, that missing record is the whole argument.

One rule for file names

Start every file name with the RA number, with a zero in front: RA-03-abstract. Never "abstract final v2 revised". Then sorting by name also sorts by cycle.

Part 2 • Setting up RA-1

RA-1 is the only bill you build from zero. Every bill after it just continues from the one before. Get these four right and the rest of the project is easy.

1 • Build the item list from the PO, not the tender

Item code, description, unit, PO quantity, rate. If the awarded BOQ is different from the one you tendered, the awarded one wins. Note the difference now. Do not argue about it later.

2 • Decide how each item will be measured, and write it down

IS 1200 has a part for each type of work. Your contract may change it. If you assume the method instead of agreeing it in writing, you will have a fight at RA-4.

3 • Keep one measurement register, not one sheet per bill

Every measurement gets one row: RA number, item code, location or grid, drawing or JMR number, nos, L, B, D. Never copy last month's sheet to make this month's.

4 • Let the abstract calculate itself

Cumulative, previous and current should all come from your measurement rows. The moment "previous" is a number somebody typed by hand, it can be wrong — and nothing will warn you.

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WHY POINTS 3 AND 4 MATTER MOST

They are the only two decisions on this page that make the mistake in **Part 4** impossible. Without them you have to catch that mistake by eye, every month, forever.

Part 3 • The order of work, every month

Same order, every month. The order is the point. Most mistakes happen when these steps are done out of order.

- 01 **Fix the cut-off date and tell the site.**
Work measured after cut-off belongs to the next bill. Not to an argument.
- 02 **Collect measurements against drawings and JMRs.**
Anything with no drawing or JMR number behind it will be questioned.
- 03 **Enter them in the register, with a status.**
Measured / JMR signed / certified. The status is not decoration — Part 4 depends on it.
- 04 **Enter last bill's certified figures first.**
Before you calculate this bill. Not after.
- 05 **Generate the abstract.**
It should calculate. If you are typing figures into it, stop.
- 06 **Run the six checks in Part 5.**
Ten minutes. This is the step people skip.
- 07 **Put the annexures together.**
The list is in Part 6.
- 08 **Submit, and save the acknowledgement.**
A submission nobody signed for did not happen.
- 09 **When it comes back, enter the certified figure for each item.**
This is step 4 of next month.



STEP 9 IS THE ONE THAT DIES FIRST

It feels like the least urgent job on the list. It is the most expensive one to skip, because it is what makes step 4 possible next month.

Part 4 · The carry-forward rule

This is the most common mistake in RA billing. It is also the reason for points 3 and 4 in Part 2.

Every bill has a "less previous" line. If somebody types that figure — copied from last month's sheet, or from the certified bill, or from memory — it can be wrong by one digit. And **nothing on the face of the bill will show it.**

The cumulative is right. The total adds up correctly. Only the difference is wrong.

An example

RA-2 cumulative claimed — what was really claimed	1,24,00,000
RA-3 "less previous" — what somebody typed	1,20,40,000
The bill is overstated by	3,60,000

MADE-UP PROJECT — NOT A REAL BILL

Two digits swapped places. 24 became 20.4. That is all it takes. The bill still adds up, the cumulative is still correct, and every check that looks at one bill on its own will pass it.

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THE FIX IS IN THE METHOD, NOT IN BEING CAREFUL

If "previous" is added up by the sheet from your own measurement rows, there is no figure left for anyone to mistype.

Part 5 · Six checks before the bill leaves your desk

Ten minutes, in this order, every month.

#	CHECK	WHAT IT CATCHES
1	Does "previous" match the last certified cumulative?	The carry-forward mistake in Part 4
2	Is the cumulative claim still inside the PO quantity, for every item?	Claiming more than the PO allows, before the amendment arrives
3	Does every non-schedule item have an approval number?	Billing an NS item that cannot be certified yet
4	Is anything claimed that is measured but not yet JMR-signed or inspected?	Claiming too early
5	Can every deduction be traced to a clause — and was it taken only once?	Retention taken twice; recovery on the wrong base
6	Is retention still inside the limit your contract sets?	Over-recovery that nobody reverses on its own

More on check 5

Every deduction should answer three questions: **which clause**, **on what amount**, and **has it already been taken this month**.

If a recovery is made on the quantity **issued**, and your contract does not say that, then the client's reading has quietly become the rule. Raise it in writing at RA-1, or lose it.

What the checking side notices first

A chartered surveyor who certifies bills said the same thing on his own: the first thing caught at checking is "previous" not matching the cumulative of the last verified bill. He also said that variation left unsorted usually starts at 10–15%, and can reach 50% if nobody corrects it.

ONE ENGINEER'S EXPERIENCE, SEPTEMBER 2026 — A STORY,
NOT A STATISTIC

Part 6 • What to attach to the bill

Attach the same set every month. A bill that arrives with its proof gets certified faster than one that creates three email chains.

- Abstract and bill summary
- Measurement sheets for this cycle only — not the whole book
- JMRs signed during the period
- Drawing numbers, with revision numbers
- Approvals for any NS item or deviation you have claimed
- Material reconciliation, if your contract asks for it
- Test results where the claim depends on them — cubes, compaction
- Hindrance and rain register for the period, **even when you are claiming nothing on it**

That last one is the one people leave out. It is also the cheapest protection you have against a delay penalty later.

Part 7 • What an auditor looks for

An auditor is not checking your arithmetic. He is checking whether each figure is **backed by a paper**.

- Measurement → a drawing or a signed JMR
- Rate → the PO, a rate schedule, or an approved rate analysis
- Every NS item → an approval, dated **before** the claim
- Every deduction → a clause
- Certified figures on file, not only the claimed ones
- "Previous" in each bill = certified cumulative of the bill before it

That last line is the carry-forward rule again, arriving from the other side.

Part 8 · Two registers worth keeping from day one

Both are free. Both take two minutes a day. Both are only worth money if you started them **before** you needed them.

A · Work done with no drawing yet

Work done on a site instruction, before the GFC drawing arrives, is normal. Without a record it is also unbillable.

COLUMN	WHAT GOES IN IT
Date	When it was instructed, and when it was done
Location	Grid, level or chainage — the same reference the MB will use
Instruction	What was told to you, and by whom
Proof	Sketch or photo number
Quantity	As measured that day — not guessed later
JMR	Whether a joint measurement was signed
Drawing	The GFC number, once it finally arrives

B · Hindrance and rain log

Date, weather, hours lost, what was blocked, whose account it goes to (client, contractor or weather), and the number of the letter you sent about it.

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TIMING IS THE WHOLE VALUE

A log started after the delay notice is worth very little. One running from day one is your whole defence.

Part 9 • When the bill comes back short

In order, and in writing.

First, ask for the item-wise certified figures — not just the total. If you only get one amount, ask again. That request is fair, and it is usually given.

Then sort the shortfall into four boxes. Each one has a different route:

Quantity held

Usually about process — an inspection, a test result, a joint measurement. Close it and the money comes back next cycle.

Item disallowed

Check whether it was submitted *and* acknowledged. A submission with no acknowledgement is not a submission.

Rate reduced

Ask for the reason in writing. A reduction with no stated reason is the easiest one to reverse — and the easiest one to lose by staying quiet.

Deduction applied

Check the clause. Then check it was not already taken in an earlier bill.

Keep what is left visible. Some of the gap will not come back. Track it as an open number. Do not let it disappear into next month's cumulative.



WHAT NOT TO DO

Do not treat the gap as money you are owed. Most of the difference between claimed and certified is correct. The honest position is that you can explain all of it, line by line.

Where this goes next

This book gives you the order of work. Doing it in a sheet that adds up "previous" by itself — so the mistake in Part 4 cannot happen at all — is the Billing OS.

One measurement register for the whole project. Amendments and non-schedule items added without rebuilding anything. The abstract, the bill and the current MB print all calculated from the same rows. Checks that run before you submit.

Plain Excel. No macros, no login, nothing leaves your computer. Works on Excel 2016 and later.

This Playbook stays free.

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