



EMPLOYEE WRITTEN WARNING & GUIDE

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Sample Employee Written Warning

1. Overview

Employees are some of the most valuable resources that a company has, and can contribute substantially to the success of a business. Conversely, poor employee performance or behavior can lead to a decrease in product quality, customer satisfaction, and commercial success. If you are dealing with a poor-performing employee, a written warning is a good starting point for correcting that behavior.

An employee written warning is simply a memorandum to a member of your staff, explaining that his or her job performance has been unsatisfactory. It must provide specific details about the problem (including examples, dates, names, and witnesses, where available) and explain the consequences of continuing violations or infractions.

Although it can be uncomfortable to discipline an employee, problems do not always resolve themselves: early written warnings increase the odds that changes will be made and job performance will improve. A clear explanation of the issues will minimize confusion, misunderstanding, and error, and will reiterate both your company's expectations and the consequences of not rising to your organizational standards. If problems persist, you will have a record of past issues and attempted resolutions in your personnel files and can use this information to suspend or terminate the employee.

2. Dos & Don'ts Checklist

- The usual progression for employee discipline starts with a verbal warning, moves to a written warning, and ends with a final written warning before termination. It is a good idea to have a clear employee discipline policy – including a methodical sequence of warnings and consequences – and to follow that exactly for all of your employees.
- Before issuing warnings or taking disciplinary action, perform your own investigation. Understand what is charged and the details of each alleged incident. For example, if the warning will be for “excessive absenteeism,” make sure you know each date those absences took place, over what period, and whether informal conversations took place about each occurrence.
- Interview the employee privately. They may have additional information that explains or clarifies the problem. For example, they may have relied honestly on incorrect information. Perhaps the manager they told of their absence didn't pass that information to the correct department. A private conversation may clear up misunderstandings before any formal steps are taken.
- Be as specific as possible in your written descriptions of both the performance problems and the required corrections. Vagueness gives neither adequate warning of the issue nor opportunities for improvement, and may serve to invalidate the warning itself.
- Make sure that your research is completed and the warning is given as soon as possible after the incident occurs. A delayed warning will delay corrective action, and can allow memories of an incident to fade or change over time.

- If you make changes to the enclosed form, do not delete references to the document being a written warning. If the document does not specifically label itself a written warning, its effectiveness may be questioned and it may be deemed void.

- Discuss the warning with your employee and make sure he or she understands why they are being disciplined. Ask the employee to sign a copy of the document, acknowledging that it was received. If he or she refuses, have a witness sign indicating that he or she witnessed the employee's receipt of the written warning. Give a copy of the signed written warning to your employee at the end of your discussion. Place an additional copy in the employee's personnel file.

3. Employee Written Warning Instruction

The following instructions will help you understand the terms of your employee written warning. The numbers below correspond to numbers in the warning. Please review the entire document before starting the step-by-step process.

1. Set out the specific performance problem clearly and with as much detail as possible. Provide dates, witness names, and the exact nature of the issue. If there was a violation of a written company policy or manual, include a reference to the rule that was violated.
2. Again, it's important to explain clearly the changes in behavior or performance that are required, using as much detail as possible. Statements like "Follow company policies about overtime" or "Do not remove company property" are not sufficient. Explain your company's overtime procedures, and what steps the employee must take to follow these. If the employee's behavior must change within a certain number of days/weeks, include that time frame here.
3. Use this space to give notice to your employee of your company's "next steps." If there is a progressive sequence of events that will occur, describe those in detail. Will there be a final written warning? Suspension? Immediate termination?
4. This is your employee's opportunity to provide an explanation or a rebuttal of the events leading to the warning.
5. Insert a description of your company's appeals process, and explain any steps this particular employee must take to object to the disciplinary actions taken against him or her.
6. Make sure the employee understands that his or her signature does not indicate agreement or acquiescence to the statements in the document; it simply shows that he or she received a copy. If the employee still refuses to sign, have the document signed by an upper-level staff member who witnessed the employee's receipt of the written form. Write in the staff member's name and title under his or her signature.

The tools provided in this package, together with a well-constructed employee disciplinary policy, will help foster a competent and productive workforce. Corrective measures can be taken quickly, and any impact on your business can be minimized. Moreover, if the employee is informed of future consequences for continuing violations and your company has ample documentation of these warnings, you will have taken a large step toward defending your business in any claims or lawsuits initiated down the road.

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Form Sample

WRITTEN WARNING DISCIPLINE NOTICE

Employee's Name: _____ Date: _____

Department: _____ Date of Incident: _____

1. Has a verbal warning been given?

Yes ___ No ___

If yes, date(s) of verbal warning(s) _____

2. Type of warning

- First written warning
- Final written warning

3. Explain why this warning is being given. Check all that apply (Additional information can be provided below).

<input type="checkbox"/> Tardiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to give timely notification of absence	<input type="checkbox"/> Timecard/time clock violation
<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive absenteeism	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety violation	<input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorized overtime
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor job performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Insubordination	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Pe		