



How to Write an Employee Handbook

Research Network Tip Sheet

An employee handbook, also known as an employee manual or staff handbook, is a book given to employees by an employer. The employee handbook contains company policies and procedures.

The employee handbook can be used to bring together employment and job-related information which employees need to know, such as holiday arrangements, company rules, and disciplinary and grievance procedures. An employee handbook gives clear advice to employees and creates a culture where issues are dealt with fairly and consistently.

Dos and Don'ts:

DO

- Address every major aspect of employment.
- Review your handbook annually and make modifications based on changes in the company or its policies and changes in employment law.
- Require employees to sign a handbook receipt form and ensure new receipt forms are signed whenever a handbook changes.

DON'T

- Create a contract with future and current employees. The employee handbook communicates the company's rules, policies, procedures and benefits. In a prominent place, specify that the handbook does not create a contractual relationship.
- Refer to a probationary, orientation or training period in the handbook. Such a reference suggests that after this period passes, the employee has some degree of job protection.
- Guarantee benefits. Give yourself room to modify benefit structure. State that the handbook refers to benefits existing at that particular time, and are subject to modification.

Sample Handbook Acknowledgment Form:

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Company's Employee Handbook. I understand that it contains important information about the Company, that I am expected to read the Handbook and familiarize myself with its contents and that the policies in the Handbook apply to me. I understand that nothing in the Handbook constitutes a contract or promise of continued employment and that the Company may change the policies in the Handbook at any time.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that my employment is at will. I understand that I have the right to end the employment relationship at any time and for any reason, with or without notice, with or without cause, and that the Company has the same right. I acknowledge that neither the Company nor I have entered into an employment agreement for a specified period of time, that only _____ may make any agreement contrary to the at-will policy, and that any such agreement must be in writing, signed by myself and _____.

_____ EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE, DATE

_____ EMPLOYEE'S NAME (PRINT)

Sample Employment Handbook Table of Contents:

- Handbook Introduction: Introduction to the Company, History of the Company, Mission Statement of the Company, Vision Statement, The Purpose of This Handbook
- Hiring: Commitment to Equal Opportunity, Recruitment, Internal Application Procedures, “Refer a New Hire” Rewards, Employment of Relatives
- Employee Classifications: Temporary Employees, Part-Time and Full-Time Employees, Exempt and Non-Exempt Employees
- New Employee Information: New Employee Orientation, Orientation Period, Proof of Work Eligibility
- Hours: Standard Workweek/Time and Attendance, Time Reporting, Breaks and Meal Periods
- Compensation: Salary, Position Classification Policy, Your Paycheck, Direct Deposit, Overtime
- Employee Benefits: Employee Benefit Plans, Domestic Partner Coverage, Health Care Benefits, State Disability Insurance, Workers’ Compensation Insurance, Unemployment Insurance
- Leave and Time Off: Vacation, Holidays, Sick Leave, Paid Time Off, Family and Medical Leave, Leave Available, Bereavement Leave, Military Leave, Voting, Jury Duty
- Use of Company Property: Company Property, Telephone System, Return of Company Property
- Employee Performance: Job Performance, Performance Reviews
- Workplace Behavior: Professional Conduct, Punctuality and Attendance, Dress, Grooming, and Personal Hygiene, Pranks and Practical Jokes, Threatening, Abusive, or Vulgar Behavior, Horseplay, Fighting, Sleeping on the Job, Insubordination, Progressive Discipline
- Health and Safety: Workplace Safety, Workplace Security, Emergencies, Smoking, Violence
- Employee Privacy: Workplace Privacy, Telephone Monitoring
- Computers, Email, and the Internet: Email, Internet Use
- Employee Records: Personnel Records, Confidentiality, Changes in Personal Information, Inspection of Personnel Records, Work Eligibility, Medical Records
- Drugs and Alcohol: Prohibition of Drug and Alcohol Use at Work, Inspection to Enforce Policy Against Drugs and Alcohol, Drug Testing, Leave for Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation and Your EAP
- Trade Secrets and Conflicts of Interest: Confidentiality and Trade Secrets, Conflicts of Interest
- Discrimination and Harassment: Anti-Discrimination Policy, Harassment
- Complaint policies: Complaint Procedures, Open-Door Promise
- Ending Employment: Final Paycheck, Severance, Insurance Continuation, Exit Interviews, References

Sources for Further Information:

- Create Your Own Employee Handbook: A Legal & Practical Guide for Employers – Can be purchased at Nolo.com or Amazon. Much of this tip sheet has been adapted from Nolo resources.
- Writing Employee Handbooks (SBA) - <http://www.sba.gov/content/employee-handbooks>.
- Guides to writing Employee Handbooks from the National Federation of Independent Business. Go to NFIB.com and search for “employee handbook”.
- Society for Human Resource Management.
- Industry specific sample employee handbooks can sometimes be found on industry specific association websites.
- Searching google for an employee handbook acknowledgement form produces many samples.