

Disciplinary Appeal Letter (Invitation and Outcome)

Letter · UK · Published 2026-09-08 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

Disciplinary appeal letters are the two documents an employer sends once an employee has appealed a disciplinary decision — the letter inviting them to an appeal hearing, and the letter confirming the appeal outcome. Between them they name who will hear the appeal and why that person was not involved in the original decision, record the grounds the employee has raised, confirm the right to be accompanied, and set out whether the original decision is confirmed, varied, or overturned.

The appeal is the last stage of the Acas Code, and the last chance to put right anything the earlier stages got wrong — a missing document, a witness never interviewed, a sanction out of line with how similar cases were handled. It is also the stage employers most often handle badly, usually by letting the manager who made the decision hear the challenge to it. An appeal run properly can rescue a flawed process; an appeal run as a formality confirms the flaws in writing.

This template gives you both letters in full, with every placeholder marked, plus what to do when the employee's own appeal letter lands, how to choose an impartial hearer, and how to decide whether the appeal is a review or a rehearing.

When to use these letters

Use these two letters after a disciplinary outcome has been confirmed in writing and the employee has appealed against it. The first calls the appeal hearing; the second confirms what the appeal decided. They work for an appeal against any sanction — a first written warning, a final written warning, dismissal with notice, or summary dismissal — because in each case the Acas Code asks for the same four things: no unreasonable delay, grounds in writing, an impartial hearer, and a written result.

They are not the letters for an employee who has simply complained about the outcome in passing. An appeal starts when the employee says, in writing, that they are appealing and why. If someone raises a separate problem that has nothing to do with the disciplinary decision — how a manager has treated them, say — that is a grievance and belongs in the grievance procedure, not folded into the appeal.

Do not use them to run a second appeal. Our disciplinary policy template gives one appeal stage and says the appeal outcome is final; adding informal further rounds keeps a closed matter open and gives the employee a reasonable expectation you will not want to meet next time.

When the employee's appeal letter arrives

1. Acknowledge it in writing within [number, e.g. 2] working days, confirming the date it was received. If it arrived after the deadline in your policy, say whether you are accepting it anyway and why — late appeals are often worth hearing, and refusing one on a technicality reads badly later.
2. Read it for grounds, not tone. Appeal letters are written by people who have just been disciplined or dismissed; the useful content is usually buried in the complaints. Strip out each distinct ground and list it.
- 3.

Check the grounds against the file. Typical grounds are that the finding was not supported by the evidence, that new evidence has come to light, that the sanction was too severe or inconsistent with similar cases, or that the procedure was not followed. Each needs a different kind of answer, and some can be checked before the hearing.

4. Decide whether further investigation is needed before the hearing. If the employee names a witness nobody spoke to, or produces a document, deal with it before the hearing and disclose the result — not on the day.
5. Appoint the hearer, and confirm in the invitation letter why that person was not involved in the original decision.
6. Diarise the hearing and the outcome letter. "Without unreasonable delay" is the Code's test, and an appeal that drifts for two months fails it whatever the outcome.
7. Where the appeal follows a dismissal, do not assume the internal appeal pauses any external deadline: employment tribunal time limits are set out on GOV.UK and run on their own timetable.

Why the original decision-maker must not hear the appeal

The Acas Code says the appeal should be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by a manager who has not previously been involved in the case. There is a practical reason behind the wording: an appeal heard by the person who made the decision is not a review, it is the same person being asked to agree with themselves. They will almost always confirm what they already decided, and everyone involved knows it before the meeting starts. The employee gets no remedy, and you get a hearing that adds nothing to the file except evidence that the process was closed.

It also throws away the only real benefit of the appeal stage. A fresh pair of eyes is the cheapest way to find the missing witness statement, the inconsistency with how a similar case was handled last year, or the sanction that has drifted above what the conduct warranted — while it is still fixable internally, and before anybody has to explain it to a tribunal.

Small employers do hit the limit of who is available, and the Code recognises this with "wherever possible". Acas guidance for that situation is not to abandon impartiality but to get as close to it as you can: use a director or owner who took no part in the case, a manager from another site or function, or an external person — an HR consultant, a non-executive director, a trustee — brought in to hear the appeal. Whichever route you take, name the person in the invitation letter and say in one sentence why they are independent of the original decision. If nobody uninvolved genuinely exists, say that plainly too, and record what you did instead to keep the hearing fair.

Review or rehearing?

Decide before you write the invitation letter whether the appeal is a review of the original decision against the grounds raised, or a complete rehearing of the case. Nothing in law requires one or the other, but the employee is entitled to know which they are getting, so the letter has to say.

A review is the normal choice where the original process was sound and the employee is challenging the conclusion or the sanction. The hearer works from the existing evidence plus whatever the appeal has added, and tests the decision rather than remaking it from scratch.

A rehearing is the better choice where the appeal alleges a procedural defect that matters — evidence never disclosed, a hearing the employee could not properly attend, a decision taken by someone with an interest in the outcome. Rehearing the case in full is often the only way to cure a defect at the earlier stage, and it is worth the extra hours. If you start a review and it becomes obvious the original process was flawed, say so at the hearing and convert it rather than pressing on.

Letter one — invitation to the appeal hearing

[Date]

Private and confidential

Dear [first name],

Invitation to an appeal hearing — disciplinary outcome of [date]

Thank you for your letter of [date] appealing against the decision to [issue you with a first written warning / issue you with a final written warning / dismiss you with notice / dismiss you summarily], which was confirmed to you in my letter of [date]. I am writing to invite you to an appeal hearing to consider the grounds you have raised.

The hearing will take place on [date] at [time] at [location, or video-call details]. It will be heard by [name, job title], who [took no part in the investigation, the disciplinary hearing, or the decision / is an external [HR consultant / non-executive director] appointed to hear your appeal because no manager uninvolved in the case is available at [Your company]]. [Name, job title] will attend to take notes.

The grounds of appeal I have taken from your letter are: [ground 1 — in the employee's own words as far as possible]; [ground 2]; [ground 3 — add or remove as needed]. If I have missed or misstated any ground, please tell me before the hearing so it can be corrected.

The hearing will be [a review of the original decision against the grounds you have raised / a complete rehearing of the case].

I enclose [the notes of the disciplinary hearing on [date], the outcome letter of [date], and the evidence considered at the hearing]. [Where the appeal has prompted further enquiries, add:] Since receiving your appeal, [name] has [interviewed [name] / obtained [document] / checked [record]], and I enclose [the further evidence] so that you can consider it before we meet.

If you want the appeal to consider any documents of your own, or to hear from any witness, please send me copies and names by [date].

You have the right to be accompanied at the hearing by a colleague or a trade union representative. Please tell me the name of your chosen companion by [date]. If your companion cannot attend at the time above, tell me as soon as possible and propose an alternative time within five working days of [date] — we will rearrange to any reasonable time you propose.

The possible outcomes of the appeal are that the original decision is confirmed, that it is varied — for example a sanction reduced or a warning shortened — or that it is overturned in full. Under the [Your company] disciplinary procedure the sanction cannot be increased on appeal. [Only if your own procedure genuinely allows an increase, replace that sentence with a plain statement that it does — nobody should be surprised by a heavier sanction they were never told was possible.]

[For an appeal against dismissal, add:] Your employment ended on [date] and bringing this appeal does not change that date. If your appeal succeeds, [set out exactly what will happen — for example: you will be reinstated with your continuous service preserved and paid for the period from [date] to your return].

The outcome will be confirmed to you in writing as soon as possible after the hearing. The appeal is the final stage of the [Your company] disciplinary procedure.

If you cannot attend on [date], or you need an adjustment to take part fully — for example because of a disability — please contact me on [phone/email] straight away.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [job title], [Your company]

Running the appeal hearing

1. Open by confirming what the appeal is against, the grounds recorded, and whether the hearing is a review or a rehearing.
2. Take each ground in turn and let the employee explain it in their own words before you respond. The companion may address the hearing and sum up the employee's case; the employee answers questions themselves.
3. Put any new evidence to the employee and give them time to respond to it, adjourning if it is substantial. Nothing should influence the decision that the employee has not seen.
4. Ask what outcome the employee is seeking. It is often narrower than the letter suggested, and knowing it makes a varied outcome easier to shape.
5. Adjourn before deciding. Deciding in the room, in front of the employee, looks like a decision that was made before the meeting.
6. Write the outcome letter against the grounds, ground by ground, and send it as soon as possible.

Letter two — the appeal outcome

[Date]

Private and confidential

Dear [first name],

Outcome of your appeal hearing — [date of appeal hearing]

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the appeal hearing held on [date] at [location], which I chaired. You attended [accompanied by [companion name], [colleague / trade union representative] / unaccompanied, having been offered the right to be accompanied]. [Name, job title] took notes and a copy is enclosed.

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Your appeal was against the decision to [sanction], confirmed in the letter of [date]. You appealed on the following grounds: [ground 1]; [ground 2]; [ground 3].

I have considered each ground in turn.

[Ground 1]: [state the finding and the reason for it in two or three sentences — what you looked at, what you concluded, and why.]

[Ground 2]: [finding and reason.]

[Ground 3]: [finding and reason.]

[Where further enquiries were made, add:] In reaching my decision I also [interviewed [name] on [date] / reviewed [document] / checked [record]], and I have taken account of what you told me at the hearing about [point].

[Keep exactly one of the three decision paragraphs below and delete the other two.]

[Decision — appeal not upheld:] Having considered your grounds of appeal, I do not uphold your appeal. The original decision to [sanction] stands on the same terms as set out in the letter of [date], [including the expiry of the warning on [date]].

[Decision — appeal upheld in part, original decision varied:] I uphold your appeal in part. [Say which ground succeeded and why.] The original decision is varied as follows: [state the new outcome precisely — for example, the final written warning of [date] is replaced by a first written warning, which will remain live on your disciplinary record until [date], after which it will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes]. [Where a dismissal is varied to a lesser sanction, state the date you return to work, how your continuous service is treated, and what will be paid for the period since [date].]

[Decision — appeal upheld, original decision overturned:] I uphold your appeal. The decision to [sanction] is overturned. [Set out what follows: the warning of [date] will be removed from your disciplinary record and disregarded for all purposes / your dismissal is revoked, you are reinstated with effect from [date], your continuous service is preserved, and you will be paid for the period from [date] to [date].] [Add the practical arrangements — return date, who you will meet on your first day back, and what, if anything, will be said to colleagues.]

This is the final stage of the [Your company] disciplinary procedure and there is no further right of appeal. [Where relevant, add:] Nothing in this letter prevents you from raising a grievance about a separate matter that was not part of this appeal.

A copy of this letter and the appeal hearing notes will be kept on your confidential disciplinary file. If anything in this letter is unclear, please contact [name/role] on [phone/email].

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [job title], [Your company]

Delivery and record-keeping

- Send the invitation letter with enough notice for the employee to arrange a companion and read any new evidence — [number] working days is a reasonable default, more when the enclosures are heavy.

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- Hand the outcome letter over in person where the employee is still employed, and send it by [email / post to the home address] the same day. For an appeal against dismissal, post and email it: the employee is no longer on site.
- File both letters, the appeal letter from the employee, the hearing notes, and any further evidence in the confidential disciplinary file at [system/location], separate from the general personnel file.
- Update the disciplinary record if the appeal varied or overturned the sanction — including the warning expiry date, which changes with it. A record that still shows the original sanction is the mistake that surfaces at the next hearing.
- Tell payroll and [HR system] immediately where an appeal reverses a dismissal, so reinstatement, continuity of service, and back pay are actioned on the dates the letter promised.
- Retain the file in line with your data retention policy — an appeal outcome is usually the last internal document a tribunal claim would be built on.

How to use this template

1. Acknowledge the employee's appeal in writing first, listing the grounds you have taken from it and inviting them to correct your list.
2. Appoint someone who took no part in the original decision, and put the reason they are independent into the invitation letter in one sentence.
3. Decide whether the appeal is a review or a rehearing before you send the invitation, and say which in the letter.
4. Deal with any new evidence or further investigation before the hearing and disclose it with the invitation, never on the day.
5. In the outcome letter, answer each ground separately, then keep one of the three decision paragraphs and delete the other two.
6. Send the outcome as soon as possible after the hearing, update the disciplinary record to match it, and file everything on the confidential disciplinary file.

Official guidance

- › [Acas — Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures](#)
- › [Acas — Disciplinary appeal letter templates for employers](#)
- › [Acas — How to appeal a disciplinary or grievance outcome](#)
- › [legislation.gov.uk — Employment Relations Act 1999, section 10](#)

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