

Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A disciplinary policy is the written procedure your organisation follows when an employee's conduct falls below the standard the business needs — how concerns are investigated, how a disciplinary hearing runs, what sanctions can result, and how the employee can appeal. It gives managers a fair, repeatable route through situations most of them face rarely and under pressure.

The procedure matters as much as the outcome. An employment tribunal looks first at how a decision was reached: a dismissal for genuine misconduct can still be unfair if the process was rushed, one-sided, or inconsistent with how similar cases were handled before.

This template follows the structure of the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures — establish the facts, tell the employee in writing, hold a hearing, allow accompaniment, decide, and offer an appeal — and adds the practical detail the Code leaves to you.

Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how [Your company] deals with concerns about employee conduct. It applies to all employees, including those on probation, but not to [agency workers/self-employed contractors — state any exclusions]. Poor performance caused by lack of skill or capability rather than conduct is handled under our capability procedure.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and [Your company] may amend it from time to time.

Principles

- We follow the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures at every formal stage.
- No formal action is taken until the facts have been reasonably investigated.
- The employee is told the case against them in writing, with the evidence, before any hearing.
- Employees may be accompanied at any disciplinary hearing or appeal by a colleague or a trade union representative.
- No employee is dismissed for a first act of misconduct, except in cases of gross misconduct.
- Matters are handled promptly, consistently, and confidentially, and every stage is recorded.

Informal resolution

Most conduct issues should be resolved by a quiet, early conversation between the employee and their line manager, not by this procedure. The manager explains the concern, hears the employee's side, agrees what needs to change, and notes the conversation in [system/location]. An informal note is not a warning and does not sit on the disciplinary record.

Move to the formal procedure when informal action has not worked, or the alleged conduct is too serious for an informal conversation.

Investigation

1. Appoint an investigating officer ([name/role]) who will not chair any later hearing, wherever the size of the business allows.
2. Gather the relevant evidence promptly: statements from those involved, documents, rotas, CCTV, or system records.
3. Hold an investigatory meeting with the employee where their account is needed. Make clear it is not a disciplinary hearing.
4. Consider suspension on full pay only where there is a genuine risk to people, property, or the investigation itself. Suspension is a neutral act, not a sanction, and should be as brief as possible.
5. Decide whether there is a case to answer. If not, tell the employee and close the matter. If so, arrange a hearing.

The disciplinary hearing

1. Write to the employee setting out the allegation, the possible outcome, the evidence relied on, the hearing arrangements, and the right to be accompanied. Allow [number] working days to prepare.
2. Hold the hearing without unreasonable delay, chaired by [role — a manager not involved in the investigation, wherever possible].
3. Explain the allegation, go through the evidence, and give the employee a full opportunity to respond, present their own evidence, and answer questions.
4. Adjourn before deciding. Never announce an outcome in the meeting itself.
5. Confirm the decision in writing within [number] working days, including the reason, any sanction and how long it stays live, what improvement is required, and how to appeal.

Disciplinary outcomes

Depending on the seriousness of the conduct and any live warnings, the outcome of a hearing may be:

- No action — the allegation is not upheld and nothing is placed on the employee's file.
- First written warning — normally live for [number, e.g. 6] months.
- Final written warning — normally live for [number, e.g. 12] months, for serious misconduct or further misconduct during a live warning.
- Dismissal with notice, or another sanction permitted by contract such as demotion or transfer, normally where a final written warning is already live.
- Summary dismissal without notice for gross misconduct. Examples at [Your company] include theft, violence, fraud, harassment, serious breach of health and safety rules, and working while unfit through alcohol or drugs. [Adapt this list to your operation.]

Appeals

An employee may appeal against any formal sanction by writing to [name/role] within [number, e.g. 5] working days of the decision letter, stating their grounds. The appeal is heard without unreasonable delay by someone senior to, and where possible not previously involved in, the original decision — in a small business this may be [the owner/managing director].

The appeal manager may confirm, reduce, or overturn the sanction. The outcome is confirmed in writing and is final. An appeal never results in a heavier sanction.

Records and review

Investigation notes, hearing packs, decision letters, and appeal outcomes are stored confidentially in [system/location], separate from the general personnel file, and retained in line with our data retention policy. Expired warnings are disregarded for future disciplinary purposes.

This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and after any case that exposes a gap. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Name the roles first — investigator, hearing chair, appeal manager — and check the same person is not doing two of them; where a small team forces doubling up, say so in the policy.
2. Set your warning durations and appeal deadlines in the outcomes and appeals sections, and use the same numbers in every letter you send.
3. Adapt the gross misconduct list to your operation — a kitchen, a warehouse, and an office each have different fatal risks.
4. Reference this policy from your written statement of employment particulars, which must tell employees where to find your disciplinary rules.
5. Train every manager who might chair a hearing before they need to, using the ACAS step-by-step guidance alongside this policy.
6. Keep template letters — invitation, outcome, appeal outcome — next to the policy so managers do not improvise under pressure.

Official guidance

- › [ACAS — Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures](#)
- › [ACAS — Disciplinary procedure: step by step](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/disciplinary-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.