

Introductory Period Policy

Policy · US · Updated 2026-07-13 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

An introductory period policy defines the first [length, e.g. 90 days] of employment as a structured window for training, feedback, and mutual evaluation — with early check-ins, a clear review at the end, and explicit language that the period changes nothing about at-will employment. It replaces the old "probationary period" with a version drafted not to backfire.

The value is in the structure, not the label: new hires who get a training plan, scheduled feedback, and an honest early review either succeed or exit quickly, and both outcomes beat a slow drift. The legal care is in the label and the language — "probation" implies that passing it earns something, and courts have occasionally agreed. This template keeps the structure and loses the implication.

This template gives you the at-will framing, the period's length and scope as placeholders, the check-in and training rhythm, the end-of-period review with its possible outcomes, and the section most templates omit: what the period does not change.

Purpose and at-will employment

The first [length, e.g. 90 days] of employment at [Your company] is an introductory period: a structured stretch of training, feedback, and mutual evaluation for every new hire [and, where stated in writing, employees moving into substantially different roles].

Employment at [Your company] is at-will at all times — during the introductory period, at its end, and permanently after it. Either the employee or [Your company] may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice. Completing the introductory period does not create a contract, does not make employment "permanent," and does not change the standard for any future employment decision. No one other than [authorized officer] may alter the at-will relationship, and only in a signed written agreement.

What the period is for

- For the new hire: structured training against [the onboarding checklist], a named [buddy/mentor], early answers about expectations, and a safe channel to say what is not working.
- For the manager: scheduled attention to the hire during the weeks when problems are cheapest to fix — and an honest decision point instead of a drift into year two.
- For both: a shared, written picture of what good looks like in the role — [the role expectations document at location].

During the period

1. Week one: complete the essentials of [the onboarding checklist]; the manager and new hire review the role expectations together and put the period's check-ins on the calendar.
- 2.

Check-ins at [intervals, e.g. the end of weeks two, four, and eight]: short, documented conversations — what is going well, what needs work, what support is missing. Problems are named when they appear, not saved for the final review.

3. Training sign-offs are recorded as completed at [system/location] — by the end of the period, the record shows what the person was trained on and when.
4. Concerns in either direction escalate immediately rather than waiting for a scheduled check-in — including to [HR / name/role] where the new hire prefers.

The end-of-period review

Before the period ends, the manager holds a documented review against the role expectations: performance, conduct, attendance, and training progress. It has three usual outcomes — none of which changes at-will employment:

- Continue: the expected outcome — feedback recorded, goals set for the next [interval].
- Extend: where more time would genuinely answer the question, the period may be extended once, by up to [length], in writing, with specific goals — an extension is a plan, not a postponement.
- End employment: where the role or the fit is not working, employment ends with [final-pay and offboarding steps per your state's rules]. This outcome, like the others, is an exercise of at-will employment, not a verdict the policy requires.

What the period does not change

- At-will status: unchanged during, at the end of, and after the period — completing it confers no new employment rights.
- Legal protections: every federal, state, and local employment protection applies from day one; nothing about the period suspends or reduces them.
- Benefits: eligibility and waiting periods follow [the plan documents and benefits summary at location], which may or may not align with the introductory period — the period itself decides nothing about benefits.
- Standards: the conduct and performance expectations in [the handbook and code of conduct] apply in full from the first day, as does [the progressive discipline policy] — whose steps remain discretionary guidelines for everyone, new or tenured.

Records and review

Check-in notes, training sign-offs, review documents, and any extension letters are kept in the personnel file at [system/location] for [period]. [Name/role] tracks period end dates so reviews happen before, not after, the date passes — a review that never happened is the worst of both worlds: no evaluation, and an implied pass.

This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and whenever its language is tested in a dispute. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Search your handbook and offer letters for "probation," "permanent," and "passed" — this policy only works if every other document uses the same at-will language it does.
2. Set the length as a deliberate choice for your roles ([90 days] is common; complex roles may warrant more) and put the check-in dates on calendars at hire, not from memory.
3. Write the role-expectations document before the first hire under this policy — a review "against expectations" that were never written down is a vibe with a date on it.
4. Train managers that the final review is a decision, not a formality — and that "extend" needs written goals, or it is just a postponement.
5. Check your state's final-pay and unemployment rules before connecting any process to the period's end date — the details vary by state and locality.

Official guidance

- › [EEOC — Small business resources](#)
- › [DOL — Wage and Hour Division](#)
- › [NLRB — Employee rights](#)

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/introductory-period-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.