

# Employee progressive discipline policy

## Policy brief & purpose

Our Progressive Discipline policy outlines the steps we will take to address an employee's misconduct.

We recognize that people make mistakes and our employees may not always follow our policies closely. We want to give our employees a chance to correct their behavior when possible and assist them in the process. We also want to ensure that serious offenses are thoroughly investigated and dealt with.

## Scope

This policy applies to all our employees.

## Policy elements

Our disciplinary process has six steps of increasing strictness. These steps are:

1. Verbal warning
2. Informal meeting with supervisor
3. Formal reprimand
4. Formal disciplinary meeting
5. Penalties
6. Termination

All these phases are official and managers should document them. HR must also keep records of the process from step 3 onwards.

Managers should let employees know when they launch a progressive discipline procedure. For example, pointing out a performance issue is not necessarily a verbal warning and may be part of the regular feedback an employee receives. If managers judge that a progressive disciplinary process is appropriate, they must clarify this to their team member and document the step.

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Each step may be repeated instead of moving forward to the next step at managements' discretion. For example, a supervisor may choose to have more than one informal meeting with their employees (step 2) before they ask HR to issue a formal reprimand (step 3.) Managers can make the decision to repeat a step if they:

- Feel that the step was not properly executed the first time.
- See signs of improvement in their employee and want to help them further.
- Believe conditions or parameters change enough to make repeating the step necessary.

## Explaining the steps

**Step 1:** When a manager issues a verbal warning to an employee, they should do so privately. When appropriate, they should provide that employee with a copy of the company policy they violated, and explain our progressive discipline steps. Supervisors should provide employees with any coaching or advice they need.

Employees have *two weeks* to correct their behavior before step 2 takes effect.

**Step 2:** A manager discusses corrective actions with an employee. Employees should receive actionable feedback on how to deal with an unintentional violation. They can review coaching or mentoring methods.

Employees have *a month* to correct their behavior before step 3 takes effect.

**Step 3:** Employees receive a formal written reprimand. Upper Management should inform them that if they do not correct their behavior within *one week*, step 4 will take effect.

**Step 4:** Employees will be called in for a formal disciplinary meeting with the GM, their Department Head and/or their supervisor. They will have the chance to explain their side and upper management is obliged to investigate. Upper Management must clarify that this is the final step before an employee is penalized.

Employees must correct their behavior immediately, or step 5 takes effect.

**Step 5:** This step encompasses any penalties that employees will receive. This usually includes deduction of certain perks and benefits (as long as they are not mandatory by law.) It may also include suspension without pay or demotion for serious offenses. We will still provide counseling in this stage if appropriate (e.g. minor cases of substance abuse.) We will apply this step uniformly and fairly. It will not result in adverse impact for protected groups.

Employees must correct their behavior within *one month* before step 6 takes effect.

**Step 6:** Employees who continue to violate our policies, either voluntarily or involuntarily, by this

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stage will be terminated. This step will follow an official investigation by upper management (or legal authorities when appropriate) to ensure that terminating an employee is fair. A [termination for cause](#) will refer to employees who were guilty of severe violations or felonies.

## How to invoke progressive discipline

The progressive discipline process may begin from a different step, according to the severity of an employee's misconduct:

**Performance issues.** Procedure starts at stage 1. Examples are:

- [Absenteeism](#).
- Disregarding deadlines.
- Lack of knowledge of [Health & Safety](#) standards.

**Minor offenses (one-time).** Procedure starts at stage 1. Examples are:

- On-the-job minor mistakes.
- Breach of [dress code](#) or [smoking policy](#).

**Serious misconduct/ Repeating an offense for which a progressive discipline procedure already took place.** Procedure starts at stage 3. Examples are:

- On-the-job major mistakes.
- Rudeness to customers or partners.
- Unwillingness to follow Health & Safety standards

**Severe violations.** Procedure starts at stage 5. Examples are:

- Substance abuse.
- Offensive behavior.
- [Retaliation](#) against an employee.

**Illegal behavior.** Procedure starts at step 6. Examples are:

- Corruption/ Bribery.
- [Sexual Harassment](#).
- [Workplace Violence](#).
- Embezzlement/Fraud.

Department Heads can skip any of the steps if they believe they are obsolete. For example, if an employee has received several formal reprimands for the same offense, upper management may

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choose to terminate them directly. Or an employee may be directly suspended for a short period as a punishment.

This policy is meant to provide general guidelines. Our company reserves the right to treat circumstances in a different way from that described in this policy. But, we are always obliged to act fairly and lawfully and document every stage of the progressive discipline process.

## **Right to appeal**

Employees who were not terminated for cause or were not found guilty for illegal behavior may file an appeal. For example, if an employee thinks they were demoted unfairly, they can bring this issue to the attention of the GM. The GM will evaluate the situation, discuss with ownership and may organize a hearing.

## **Preventing progressive discipline**

Disciplining an employee is never a pleasant task. For the sake of everyone involved, we will take actions to prevent the need for disciplinary action. We will:

- Communicate our policies and [Code of Conduct](#) clearly to all new hires.
- Announce any revisions or changes in our policies to all our employees in a formal manner (e.g. bulletins, newsletters.)
- Use frequent employee performance meetings to address issues before they become problems.
- Train managers to communicate, enforce and abide by policies.
- Train employees in certain policies and procedures.
- Establish a culture of respect and collaboration.

*Disclaimer: This policy template is meant to provide general guidelines and should be used as a reference. It may not take into account all relevant local, state or federal laws and is not a legal document. Neither the author nor Innevae will assume any legal liability that may arise from the use of this policy.*

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