

# Employee Handbook: A Step By Step Guide To Preparing Your Staff Handbook

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## What Is An Employee Handbook?

An employee handbook (also known as an employee manual or staff handbook) is a document that outlines a company's regulations, policies, and employee expectations. It also specifies what employees can anticipate from the company. New employees are typically given a copy of the employee handbook along with a form to sign, indicating that they have read it and agree to the rules.

The employee handbook can compile employment and job-related information that employees should be aware of. It usually contains [three categories of material](#).

1. A welcome message, the organization's mission or purpose, company values, and more are all examples of cultural elements.
2. General information includes holiday plans, workplace incentives, non-statutory policies, policy summaries, and more.
3. Case-Specific: policies, rules, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and other material modelled after labour laws or regulations.

If an [employee handbook](#) exists, it is nearly always a part of a company's onboarding or induction process for new employees. A published employee handbook provides clear guidance and fosters a culture in which concerns are handled fairly and consistently.

Employee handbooks are essential when it comes to running a business; they assist employers in managing their organization without problems or conflicts of interest. They also help employees understand what is expected of them while on the job.

## Why Do You Need An Employee Handbook?

All your employees must comprehend your company's policies and standards. Creating an employee

handbook demonstrates to employees that there are similar standards in place for all employees – the same rules and norms apply to all employees, and all employees are treated equally.

[Employee handbooks](#), by clearly outlining corporate standards, can assist maintain a positive, productive, and safe work environment free of inappropriate or harmful behaviour. As a result, the handbook can shield the company from sexual harassment, wrongful termination, and discrimination litigation, as well as assist you in defending against a dispute.

An employee handbook compiles all of your company's policies and procedures in one place for easy reference. If an employee is expecting a child, they may not feel comfortable inquiring about the company's parental leave policy early in the pregnancy. If this information is in the employee handbook, they can search it up independently.

A handbook for employees might also shield your organization from legal action. For example, if an employee is terminated, having a clear termination policy recorded in the handbook might help demonstrate that your organization was legally correct.

## **How To Write A Good Employee Handbook**

An employee manual should be well-organized and written in plain English. Create an outline with a logical framework after knowing what material you want to include. For example, it's usually a good idea to group all of your company's benefits in one section. This not only makes writing easier for you, but it also makes it more valuable for employees.

Shorter sentences and simpler language are easier to understand. Avoid using industrial jargon or phrasing that is difficult to understand. The clearer and simpler the message, the better.

After you've completed a draft, consult with an employment lawyer to ensure that everything is legally sound. If feasible, have a skilled writer copy edit your employee handbook and have someone with eagle eyes proofread it for mistakes.

## What Should Be Included In An Employee Handbook?

An [employee handbook](#) should outline your company's regulations, your expectations of your employees, and what they may expect from your company. It should outline your legal obligations as an employer and the rights of your employees.

The first list, below, comprises topics that, in most cases, must be in writing for legal reasons and, as such, should be included in the employee handbook so that everything is listed in one location. The second list contains items that you may or may not include.

### 1. What employment policies should be documented and incorporated in an employee handbook?

In general, the policies outlined below should be included in an employee handbook, which the employee must sign. You may also want to enter into separate written agreements with the employee regarding other policies (e.g., arbitration of disputes, nondisclosure agreement, assignment of intellectual property rights, nonsolicitation agreement, non-compete agreement — consult with an employment attorney to determine what policies and agreements are appropriate for your business).

- Equality in the workplace (antidiscrimination)
- Antiharassment
- Antiretaliation
- Employment is on an at-will basis.
- General employment information
- Security and safety
- Pay policies such as payday information, timekeeping, and overtime eligibility
- Benefits
- Policy on Sick Leave
- Vacation pay policy
- Promotions and raises are evaluated using a scoring system.
- The procedure for filing a complaint
- Disclaimers — Although the employee manual provides policies and guidelines, it is not a promise or contract of continued employment. Mention that the policies in the employee handbook are subject to change at the employer's discretion.
- Form of Receipt Acknowledgement - New workers are frequently required to sign an acknowledgement form declaring that they have received, read, and comprehended the information in the employee handbook and agree to its provisions.
- Acknowledgement forms often include the following information:
  - A statement stating that the handbook is not a contract or other type of employment agreement.
  - A statement stating that the handbook may change with or without warning and that the employee agrees to these changes. Employers use this to protect themselves from liability if a policy changes and the employee is not explicitly advised of the change.

## 2. What else should your employee handbook include?

- Letter of Introduction from the CEO or Founder
- Mission statement for the company
- Ideal corporate culture
- Annual office shutdowns
- Attendance and dress code, if applicable, are examples of behavioural expectations.
- Standard operation hours – add any policies regarding personnel working outside of these hours.
- Review process and how to obtain a promotion/pay hike.
- When behavior does not match expectations, progressive discipline or policy is used.
- They must sign a form indicating that they have read the employee handbook and agree to the requirements.

## Publishing Your Employee Handbook

You must publish your employee handbook in a format that all employees can access after you have written it. Many companies preserve their employee handbook as a PDF and keep it on their company intranet site. You can also print hard copies, but a digital version is more eco-friendly and easier to keep up with.

Save previous versions of your guide and the dates of any modifications. In the event of litigation, you may need to refer to this information.

## Step By Step Guide To Creating An Employee Handbook

Now that you understand what an employee handbook is, why it is important and what it should include, let us proceed to how to develop one using the [following steps](#).

### Step 1: Review And Revise Current Company Policies As Needed.

The handbook is written based on company policies and practices. Steps for generating corporate policies may be found in the following article from [The Human Capital Hub](#).

You should search the workplace for common practices already in place; if no policies exist, they should be created. Once the rules have been revised and common practices have been defined, legal counsel should examine them, and HR should use these final policies to build the employee handbook.

Ensure that your statements are not overly broad. It might be illegal, for example, to write in a handbook that employees must "respect others and the organization." Employees may interpret such a statement as limiting their ability to criticize the corporation (e.g., its working conditions), which is a protected coordinated activity. A handbook, on the other hand, might declare, "Being insubordinate, threatening, intimidating, or rude, or attacking a manager, supervisor, coworker, customer, or vendor will result in discipline process being taken against you."

## **Step 2: Make A List Of What Should Be Included In The Employee Handbook**

The employee handbook should include the employer's mission statement, equal employment opportunity statement, contractual disclaimer, employee handbook purpose, and background information on the organization. It is up to the employer to decide whether or not to incorporate other topics. Legal mandates for legislation affecting employees, such as the Labour Act in Zimbabwe, are important issues to consider. If an employer fails to convey things in the employee handbook, there may be confusion and noncompliance with the regulations. Below, you'll see an example [table of contents](#).

## Table of contents

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome from leadership team
- Information about the organisation
- Mission/values
- Strategic plan
- Organisational chart and national structure

### 2. JOINING THE ORGANISATION

- Signing up – forms to complete
- Working hours
- Access to building/car parking
- Business Cards
- Dress code

### 3. REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

- Salary and wage payments
- Salary review process
- Salary deductions
- Time in lieu policy

### 4. TRAVEL POLICY

- Authorisation and bookings
- Use of credit cards
- Expense reimbursement
- Personal effects/insurance

### 5. VEHICLE POLICY

- Use of company cars
- Use of own car – reimbursement

### 6. PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

- Annual appraisal process
- Performance Development Plan
- Competencies
- Training and development – study support

### 7. CODE OF CONDUCT

- Conflict of interest
- Confidentiality
- Copyright and protection of intellectual property
- Dealing with media/giving interviews
- Privacy relating to treatment of personal information

## Step 3: Create A Summary Of Each Policy And Procedure

A statement summarizing each policy and procedure should be included in the employee handbook. The statements should be simple to understand and free of legal jargon; in other words, they should be

written with the employee audience in mind.

#### **Step 4: Insert Each Summary Statement Into The Appropriate Sections Based On The Outline**

After HR has finished the layout for the employee handbook, the next step is to write the organization's position, regulations, or policies under each of the outline items.

#### **Step 5: Go Over the Entire Manual**

The review process guarantees that the material is correct and simple to understand. HR, a project team, or both may examine the handbook.

#### **Step 6: Submit The Final Version To Legal Counsel For Review**

Legal counsel will check the final form to ensure that it contains no statements that could result in contractual commitments.

#### **Step 7: Decide on a Method of Publication**

The next step is to find a provider who will create the finished employee handbook. Organizations can issue a request for proposals to a few carefully selected vendors. Once the vendor has been chosen, the employer should collaborate on all aspects of the publication process, including formatting the handbook to a specified size and style. Once the formatting is finished, the handbook should be reviewed and approved before printing.

#### **Step 8: Hand out Handbooks**

When the vendor produces final copies of the handbooks, the company must decide how to distribute them, such as during new-hire orientation or by handing them out to staff.

Some firms post the handbook online via their intranet or internal e-mail; nevertheless, printed copies must be made available to employees who do not have Internet access or upon employee request. When modifications to policies are made and need to be communicated to employees, posting the employee handbook on the company intranet or by e-mail is also useful.

## Step 9: Make Any Necessary Updates

Employers should designate a point person to update the employee handbook if employment laws or internal rules change. It is also critical to undertake a comprehensive handbook review regularly, such as every one to two years, to ensure that no legislation or policy changes have been neglected and that all policies are still applicable and consistently enforced throughout the firm.

## Examples of Creative Employee Handbooks

Companies often spent significant time and resources designing and creating staff handbooks. The following are some well-articulated employee handbook examples **Trello**

Trello, an Atlassian company, uses its Kanban job management system to conveniently convey [its employee handbook](#). You can assess many aspects of the company's tactics organized into columns, including one titled 'On Your First Day' for their new employee to get started with ease and comfort.

[Sterling](#) is a well-known example of an employee handbook. This company's policy document contains a wealth of information. They spread information colorfully and logically to make it appealing and interactive. It uses a website to convey its message throughout the company. It starts with a friendly message from the CEO and then becomes more technical in the later sections.

## Conclusion

An employee handbook serves [several functions](#). Use them to educate staff about your company's culture and clear up any confusion about important topics. When you have completed this manual, ask your attorney to review it for authenticity and legality.

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