

# How do you enforce 'start times' without punching a time clock?

**Question:** "Does anyone have a policy on start/end work times for jobs that don't require employees to punch time clocks? We polled the staff as to when everyone would like to start work in the morning, and they agreed to 8 a.m. Now, people have started strolling in at 8:15, but they put the usual 8 a.m. on their time sheets. Their supervisors don't mind, but I'm the project assistant, so how should I address this issue?" — *Virginia M. Howard*

**See Comments below**

**sgggggg December 31, 2010 at 12:17 pm**

Is it legal for a company to make its contract workers punch their time clocks when we do not work for this company we just work at this company?

**Mary January 9, 2009 at 2:56 pm**

Our agency is very progressive. We have flex time here and are only required to check a box when we enter and leave the building. As long as we put in our required amount of hours, we don't have a start time. We are required to do an electronic (PC) accounting of our hours.

**Jocelyn October 27, 2008 at 10:28 am**

I think we have all spent more than 10 minutes of our companies time here to argue about others coming in late, Geezo. It sounds like each company here either allows their employees the flexibility in their schedule or does not. It really depends on the owners and the nature of the business. What ever that is for each company is not something to argue here about, just advise. We seem to be on the same page about false time sheets is illegal, because it is, there is no gray area there. If this company prefers this type of flexibility they should do themselves a liability favor and nix those time sheets, or start to choose to enforce this 8:00 start time.

**Darcy October 27, 2008 at 9:38 am**

I think it depends on your supervisors expectations and needs. No one should lie about their time sheet. However, flexible hours is an agreement between a supervisor and an employee. My supervisor knows I sometimes work later or go above and beyond, so he never says a word when I'm running late in the morning or returning from lunch. He knows I make it up in other ways. I do not lie on my time sheet, but others may not know the unwritten subtle agreement we have.

**B.J. October 24, 2008 at 4:10 pm**

Employees paid by the hour are just that – hourly employees – they are not piece workers. Each and every person should report to work on time, not exceed the allowed meal break and not leave early while reporting otherwise. This is out and out theft! Your answer seems to imply that you fall into the “late” category

**Maggie October 24, 2008 at 3:53 pm**

Oh my, none of here can make it in the real world out there...

Our start time is well by, sometime in the day, although most of try to make it in by say 10:30 11ish.

Each of us stays until our work is done, or well we are too tired to work any more.

If anyone has a meeting that person is in before the meeting and someone else to be sure the phones etc are answered.

No we have no voice mail, don't use email all that much either. There are only 5 of us. This is an architectural design firm.

It has been very hard to get used to this type of work environment, it took about 3 years for me to stop fighting the rest of the group. The owner is the worst.

One of the great things about this type of schedule, you have a life. You have the ability to schedule things, doctors, school things, with little worry.

Now if you can not get your work done in this environment, we don't keep you. You really have to be committed to the work at hand, and do it the very best it can be done.

**Veronica October 24, 2008 at 3:46 pm**

The owner of the company I work for is very adamant about his employees clocking in late. If someone clocks in 1 minute late, we base it in 15 minute increments. Some have clocked out 1 minute before and are also based in 15 min. increments. After time cards are calculated an Attendance Report is processed and the V.P. will post it by the time clock for all to see. Plus talking to the employees on this, has cut down on tardiness. Our owners are in the “good work ethics of our grandfathers”, so I agree with Gwen's comments.

**Casey October 24, 2008 at 3:40 pm**

Mark is 100% correct. I work in the hr department and the Department of Labor does not look kindly on timesheet fraud. The supervisors should have that issue brought to their attention. That being said, since the supervisors have no problem with the employee's late arrivals, a better solution might be to revisit the start time and either adjust it or leave it flexible. Where I work, the traffic is so bad no matter which direction you are traveling from that start times are flexible. I can leave my house the same time every day and it takes between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes to get to work. For this reason my start time is 8 am but if I arrive at 9 am it is no big deal and I only need to work through lunch or stay late to make up my time. My boss has no problem with it as long as my timesheet has the actual starting and ending times.

**Ann October 24, 2008 at 3:29 pm**

Gwen: Obviously your are very bitter. If Virginia is having a problem getting the work done than she should take it up with the supervisor. In the world today with Blackberry's, VPN, etc. is anyone really off the clock?

**Gwen October 24, 2008 at 2:56 pm**

AMEN! :)

**Gwen October 24, 2008 at 2:55 pm**

“Their supervisors don’t mind, but I’m the project assistant, so how should I address this issue?” — Virginia M. Howard”

Virginia IS affected by the tardiness of the employees on her team. She very clearly stated that she’s the project assistant. In my younger years, it used to infuriate me that those in a higher pay grade than mine would take advantage of the experience I had instead of showing up to do the work THEY were paid to do! I don’t know what “program assistant” entails in Virginia’s case, but it does affect her directly.

What’s amazing to me is the apathy of everyone that thinks it’s okay to come in late, leave early, or try to justify their obvious unwillingness to follow the rules that are set forth in their workplace! You certainly wouldn’t last in my office!

**Gwen October 24, 2008 at 2:47 pm**

Are you one of the employees the original question was posed about? ;) Seriously, Americans don’t work too hard! I’d have to say that as a whole, we’re pretty lazy. And it’s sad that the work ethic of our grandfathers and grandmothers didn’t make it all the way to my generation! I’m so proud that my parents worked hard and fought for the nice things they have! I’ve learned to have an excellent work ethic through their example... As for the general working population, we’re actually a bunch of spoiled, think-we’re-entitled, brats!

**kim October 24, 2008 at 2:18 pm**

I worked for a company where late was ‘ok’ ( it happens to be a real pet peeve of mine) and because I processed the payroll spent my time being resentful. I found another job where my workhabits are a much better match not only in this area but many others also, you may need to do this too. Life is too short.

**kstewart October 24, 2008 at 2:16 pm**

Depending on the position and industry, many jobs do not require set start and end times. Studies have proven that people are more productive at different times during the day. If the employee does the required work throughout the week, what does it matter what time they came in or left each day? Flexibility in scheduling is more desirable for most people and enhances productivity. If the supervisor is fine with what time the employee arrives or leaves, that is their business. If you need the employee there at a certain time for a meeting, schedule it and then hold them accountable for that. However, it is never appropriate to falsify timesheets. This should be discussed with HR, so they can determine if disciplinary action should be taken.

**Mark October 24, 2008 at 2:08 pm**

For those that keep saying that it is not stealing from the company or that it is okay if they work later through lunch or at the end of the shift, one important factor is being overlooked, a factor that can get the company sued. It is still timesheet fraud if someone marks that they were in at 8:00 but actually not in at 8:15, and/or if they mark that they worked until 5:00 when they actually worked until 5:15, or if they mark that they took a lunch break but actually worked through it. Not keeping accurate timesheet records can get a company, any

company, in deep trouble with both the federal and state Departments of Labor and has resulted in multi-million dollar fines. Even if you ignore the fact that a person is not coming in to work when they are supposed to, and even if you ignore the fact that supervisors are not doing their jobs in enforcing company policy, the fact remains that Department of Labor regulations are being broken.

**Ann October 24, 2008 at 2:06 pm**

You should NOT have an issue with this if it is not effecting your job. Worry about yourself not other people. You only see what is happening when you are there to observe. You don't know what they are doing from home/via e-mail/conference calls outside of work hours, you do not know what they are doing on vacation days or how long they may be there after you leave at your scheduled time. All you know is that they come in late. If the person is doing their job and their supervisor is happy with their work and it is not effecting your ability to do your job. Then it is none of your business.

**Alicia October 24, 2008 at 1:57 pm**

Is the issue falsifying records, or the employees aren't there when you need them? I write down 8:00 on my time sheet if I get into the office anytime between 7:45 and 8:15. More often (very much more often) I arrive at 7:45 or 7:50. So I don't feel bad if on a bad traffic day I arrive at 8:10. It makes it much easier on our payroll department to not give them 15 minute increments to deal with and they have asked that we not do that. I don't take my breaks and usually eat at my desk and work through lunch. I would evaluate whether these are otherwise good, hard-working employees who get the job done no matter what (or not) and get their perspective. If they are ultimately putting in their 8 hours and their supervisors don't mind, then they aren't stealing from the company.

**Kristin October 24, 2008 at 1:53 pm**

This is one of those terrible situations where everyone starts to not only have their work performance impacted but the level of resentment only grows. The flip side to this is an employee who is chronically late but always "makes it up" by working through lunch or staying late. That is simply not acceptable!! Your start time is your start time and unless you have some arrangement with management and your coworkers its not ok to be chronically late.

**Jo October 20, 2008 at 2:14 pm**

Does the employees know they are falsifying records and that could be a criminal offense. I know we have several employees who do not punch a time clock but it is clear that they must still work their eight hours. So with that being said, if one of our employees comes in at 8:30 instead of the scheduled 8 they are expected to work their full eight hours and either take a shorten lunch or work until 5:30.

**Michelle October 20, 2008 at 9:42 am**

My boss and i discussed the situation and we both agreed that I will send him an e-mail when I arrive and when I leave for the day. It works great!

**Lee October 17, 2008 at 5:03 pm**

Deb,

I believe I DO the best I can for my employer. I take pride in my work. If I should get in 15 minutes late, almost every day, and stay 15 minutes late at the end of the day, and my supervisor doesn't mind, and the CEO doesn't mind, then why should you?

Of course, it does depend on the type of industry and office in which you work. I consider it a benefit to be at this particular company which can afford to be flexible. I am not answering the phone or opening the store. When I worked at a place where someone was always "on," I was not ever tardy. But now, no one is affected.

I also agree that falsifying legal documents such as time sheets cannot be tolerated. And when you put it that way to the supervisors, they will probably take it a little more seriously too.

**Sher October 17, 2008 at 3:19 pm**

Being on time should not be an option!

**Deb October 17, 2008 at 2:59 pm**

Liza: Are you serious? American's work too hard? I believe I should do the best job I can for my employer as they are paying my salary and benefits. Being on time should be expected. On the off day when something goes wrong, your employer is more apt to understand. I take pride in working hard and doing a good job. So sorry you obviously don't.

**Liza October 17, 2008 at 2:23 pm**

Do the employees ever have to work extra hours? Are they dedicated and consistent in their productivity? Are they salaried? Not that this excuses the time sheets, but if they are dedicated employees that work hard and get the job done, why not give them a break?

Americans work too hard anyways.

**Trish October 17, 2008 at 1:55 pm**

Your first step needs to be getting the supervisors in line. Let them know that they need to set the example and allowing this is telling the employees that it is ok to break the rules. Would your employees like it if they worked 15 minutes over and you did not pay them for that time. Our staff must call in one half hour prior to their start time if they are going to be late or absent. Once in a while is ok to come in late but making it a habit needs to be addressed. Your supervisors need to held accountable for their staff (thru disciplinary action)if they allow them to come in late and not address it with them. When you hold them accountable they will start holding the staff accountable.

**Mark October 17, 2008 at 1:42 pm**

They come in late because they are allowed to come in late. Here, everyone is expected to be ready to work at their start time. If they are not here on time, unless there is a very good reason (stuck by a train isn't acceptable since they shouldn't have cut it that close), they go through the progressive disciplinary steps. If they went so far as to come in at 8:15 but marked down that they came in at 8:00, they would be immediately fired for falsification of records. (Progressive discipline is waived for some pre-disclosed issues, like falsification of records, theft, and so on.) Your company might have a larger concern, though. If your supervisors do not care about this violation of workplace rules, how do you know what else they are allowing to happen that should not

be happening?

**Jocelyn October 17, 2008 at 1:39 pm**

People of this nature are kept to a higher standard at our company and are the example to people who do punch in, so therefore they are to arrive on time, exceptions but no habits! If not, they are spoken to just like anyone else. Now there are companies who allow staff to come in 5-15 minutes late if they are making it up consistently on the other end, like staying late each and every day. So if not only your manager doesn't mind, but the owner doesn't mind either, than I guess it would be something you should just let go. Here, we are on-time no matter what. Big cities tend to be more slack on this issue, towns are usually more strict. If the public is involved you must be open and ready for business on time. That's how I feel

**Rita October 17, 2008 at 1:27 pm**

Hmm . . . the supervisors don't mind that their employees are, in effect, stealing from your employer? Sounds like a manager needs to step in and make it clear that staff must work their assigned hours if they wish to get paid.

I work for a government agency, and falsifying employment documents, like timesheets, is grounds for dismissal, fines, or, in egregious cases, criminal charges.

Perhaps an informal discussion during a staff meeting will put these employees on notice. If that doesn't work, management follow-up with a memo outlining company policy. If that still doesn't work, the HR department should contact those 'ten o'clock scholars' that there may be consequences for their refusal to adhere to policy. This is something that should be nipped in the bud - falsifying a timesheet is very, very wrong.

**Gwen Hardin October 17, 2008 at 1:21 pm**

We use the progressive disciplinary system. The first time is a verbal warning about tardiness. The second time is a written warning, as well as the third. (The third may include a 3-day suspension with or without pay also.) The fourth time is termination. We can't allow insubordination in any form or we all lose the "perks" we have in our organization. Although it may seem severe, we have such a laid back work atmosphere, any leeway would cause us to lose that atmosphere...

**Kelley October 17, 2008 at 1:12 pm**

In our office, start time is 9:30am, no exceptions. After that it comes out of your PTO in half hour increments. For example, if you arrive at 9:35am, you lose 1/2 hour of PTO. If you arrive at 10:05am, you lose 1 hour of PTO. Also, we schedule meetings at 9:30am for an extra reason to show up on time. It works!