

Employee handbook examples and sample policies



Having a great employee handbook helps new employees understand expectations and ensures that all staff members are on the same page in regard to conduct and procedures. Reviewing the employee handbook should be an informative part of the onboarding process for new hires, so invest some time into creating the best employee handbook to help them get started on the right foot. These employee handbook examples can get you started.

Be sure that the policies that you include in your handbook are representative of your company culture and your intentions to enforce said policies. Consider how strictly or loosely you plan to enforce these policies, and ensure the tone and stringency of the policies fits with the way in which your company operates.

It's best to start your employee manual with a thorough table of contents to help employees refer back to specific workplace policies. After the table of contents, you can move on to a thorough list of employment policies including leave policies, company property usage guidelines, your company culture code or mission statement, and non-discrimination policies.

The employee handbook examples below can help you start building your own handbook. However, this is not a full employee handbook template, so there may be applicable policies or state-specific employment laws that are not included. Edits and adjustments may also be required to bring the policy templates in line with your unique company culture and industry operational standards.

Mission statement and core values

The mission statement section gets an honorable mention in this article. The mission statement and value statements are an integral part of a company's culture. They often appear in the early pages of the employee handbook to set the tone for the company values and culture for new employees reviewing the handbook. Unfortunately, creating a concise yet poignant statement to embody your company's mission and values isn't necessarily something that can be accomplished with a template.

Many companies do follow this format for their mission statement:

[Company Name] was founded with the [adjective] objective in mind; to [goal].

However, others get creative and vary the structure of the mission statement. Try this [SmartSheet template](#) to guide your mission and vision statement writing process. It's a good idea to get feedback from others within your organization when crafting a mission statement or values list for the first time.

At-will employment statement

The at-will employment statement is often followed by a signature line. In some states, it is required that the employee sign the at-will statement. Some states also provide restrictions on at-will employment. As always, it's best to check your local guidelines prior to using this template for your workplace.

Here's an at-will employment statement example for your employee handbook.

All employees of [Company Name] are hired on an "at-will" basis. Each person's employment is for no specific term. Either party may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause. Nothing in this employee handbook should be construed as a contract or a guarantee of continued employment.

Work hours

While some workplaces may operate for extended hours with multiple shifts rather than on a set 9-5 schedule, this section still holds value for all employers. Ensuring that employees understand overtime, break, and timekeeping procedures is essential to the operation of any business.

Here's a work hour policy example for your employee handbook.

Standard working hours at [Company Name] are from 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Some department's hours may vary. Your supervisor will advise you if your department's schedule varies from the norm or if business demands require you to adjust your schedule at any future date. You are entitled to an unpaid one-hour lunch each workday unless you are leaving early and working under five hours.

Overtime must be approved by your supervisor in advance and should be included on the timesheet in your total hours worked. All non-exempt employees will be paid at one and a half times their base hourly rate for any work performed over 40 hours per week.

To ensure that you are paid in a timely and accurate manner, you will be required to record your time worked and your absences on the company's employee timesheet form. This form should be completed daily and signed and forwarded to your supervisor on a weekly basis. After reviewing the form and resolving any discrepancies, your supervisor will sign the form and forward it to payroll for processing.

Please exercise care when recording your hours and leave time taken. Falsifying a time record is a breach of company policy and is grounds for disciplinary action, including the possibility of termination.

Attendance policy

[Company Name] expects all employees to assume diligent responsibility for their attendance. Regular and prompt attendance is essential to the success of the company.

If you are unable to report to work, you must notify your supervisor or department head no later than 30 minutes before your start time on each day of your absence. If you leave a voicemail message for your supervisor or department head concerning your absence, a personal follow-up call must be made by noon on the same day of the absence. Failure to properly notify the company of your absence may result in disciplinary action.

Absenteeism or tardiness that is unexcused or excessive is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Vehicle policy

This template may be modified if your organization does not possess company vehicles for employee use. It is still a good idea to include a vehicle policy even if your staff does not generally drive in the course of their work, as staff may occasionally need to operate their own vehicles to attend offsite meetings.

Here's a vehicle policy example for your employee handbook.

Company-owned vehicles may be utilized for approved business purposes. If an employee drives their own personal vehicle for approved business purposes they will be reimbursed according to the current IRS mileage rate.

Vehicles are to be driven only by those employees who have been specifically authorized to do so. Unauthorized use of a company vehicle will result in strict disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any employee who is authorized to drive a company vehicle, and allows any other unauthorized use of the vehicle will be subject to the same disciplinary action described above. Employees may not transport family members or non-employees.

Each employee who is assigned a specific vehicle for ongoing use is to maintain that vehicle according to the company's Vehicle Maintenance policy. Employees should report any maintenance concerns promptly and refrain from driving the vehicle if it does not appear to be safe to operate.

Employees should follow all relevant traffic laws and exercise safe driving practices. Employees may not operate company or personal vehicles while under the influence and should refrain from using their cell phones while driving.

Employees are responsible for any parking or traffic violations incurred while driving a company-owned vehicle or while using their personal vehicle for business purposes. Reasonable toll and parking fees will be reimbursed, but there shall be no such reimbursement on fines for violations including parking violations, moving violations, or toll violations.

Internet policy

In many job roles and industries, staff spends the majority of their time at a computer, so it makes sense that you would need a policy on internet and computer usage. Improper usage can result in viruses, security threats, or workplace misconduct. Outline what is and is not appropriate using this template. In the template, casual browsing is allowed during breaks as this tends to build goodwill with staff, but you can alter it to ban any

personal use if preferred.

Here's an internet policy example for your employee handbook.

[Company Name] provides internet access and company-owned computers for business use. The internet's vast informational and educational capabilities can help us all do a better job, but not at the expense of either productivity or security for our core business systems and sensitive company and client data.

Employees are expected to use internet access in a professional manner, primarily for business-related research and communication.

Employees with internet access must be clear on the point that the company can and will monitor internet usage for appropriateness. All existing company policies apply to conduct on the internet, especially those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, misuse of company resources, sexual harassment, information, and data security, and confidentiality.

Employees may use company computers and internet access for nonbusiness research or browsing during meal periods or other breaks, or outside of work hours, provided that all other usage policies are adhered to.

Offensive and/or sexually explicit content may not be displayed, printed, archived, stored, distributed, edited, or recorded using company devices or resources.

Software or files with direct business use may be downloaded via the Internet into the ZYX network and thus become the property of ZYX. Such files or software may be used only in ways consistent with their licenses or copyrights.

No employee may use ZYX facilities to knowingly download or distribute pirated software or data.

Intentional use of any company resources for any illegal activity is grounds for immediate dismissal, and ZYX will cooperate with any legitimate law enforcement activity in that regard.

Any employee attempting to disable, defeat or circumvent any company security facility (firewalls, proxies, screening programs, etc.) is subject to immediate dismissal.

Any file or software downloaded from the internet to company equipment must be scanned for viruses before being accessed. Do not download any files from unknown or suspicious email addresses, and report any suspicious activity to the IT department.

Social media policy

Most people are active on social media in some capacity now. Your staff should be free to express themselves online, but it's a good idea to set some ground rules when it comes to posting things that could impact the company's reputation.

Here's a social media policy example for your employee handbook.

Social media platforms are a common means of communication and self-expression. Because online postings can conflict with the interests of [Company Name] and its customers, the company has adopted the following policy. Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Outside the workplace, you have a right to participate in social media and networks using your personal email address. However, information and communications that you publish on personal online sites should never be attributed to the company or appear to be endorsed by, or to have originated from, the company.

Do not disclose company trade secrets or other confidential information related to the company, its customers, or employees. Sharing these types of information, even unintentionally, could result in harm to the company and legal action against you or the company.

If you choose to disclose your affiliation with the company in an online communication, then you must treat all communications associated with the disclosure as professional communications governed by this and other company policies.

Do not post any information or engage in any online activity that violates applicable local, state, or federal laws, or professional rules of conduct.

Avoid hostile or harassing communications in any posts or other online communications involving the company. Harassment is any offensive conduct based on a person's race, sex, gender, gender identity, national origin, color, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, religion, or any other status protected by law.

Nothing in this policy is intended to or will be applied in a manner that limits employees' rights to discuss their working conditions or engage in protected concerted activity as prescribed by the National Labor Relations Act.

Dress code

Appropriate workplace attire helps maintain professionalism, and the best way to ensure that everyone dresses appropriately is to provide clear expectations and examples. Whether your workplace follows business, business casual, or casual guidelines, be specific in your dress code policy. Ensure that these policies are not crafted in a way that discriminates based on an employee's race, religion, or gender identity.

Here's a dress code example for your employee handbook.

Employees are expected to wear appropriate business [casual] attire. Employees are expected to dress neatly and maintain appropriate personal hygiene standards.

Acceptable workplace attire includes button-up shirts, blouses, dresses, polos, khakis, dress pants, clean un-ripped jeans, sweaters, and similarly appropriate attire.

Shorts (except knee-length shorts), tank tops, mesh shirts, cutoff shirts, sweat pants, athletic wear, caps, ripped jeans, and T-shirts with controversial slogans are not appropriate.

Adjustments may be made during inclement weather and for offsite company events. Employees will be provided with advance notice of any dress code changes.

Employees in customer-facing roles are expected to dress appropriately for client meetings, which may require more formal attire. Employees should use their best judgment when determining appropriate dress for client meetings and events.

Equal employment opportunity statement

This statement appears in the employee handbook, but is often included on job applications as well. It applies to applicants and staff members. Learn more about your equal opportunity responsibilities from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([EEOC](#)).

Here's an equal employment opportunity statement example for your employee handbook.

[Company Name] recruits, hires, trains, assigns personnel, promotes, and compensates employees without

regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation. All employment decisions at [Company Name] are made on the basis of merit and job requirements.

Personnel records policy

[Company Name] maintains a personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes information such as the employee's job application, résumé, training records, copies of past performance reviews, and other applicable employment records.

Personnel files are the property of [Company Name], and access to the information they contain is restricted. Only supervisors, management, human resources staff, and legal counsel of [Company Name] who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are permitted to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the human resources department. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their files in the presence of a member of human resources or another person appointed by the company to maintain the files. Personnel records may not be removed from the premises.

Sexual harassment and discrimination

Preventing sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace is incredibly important, for the well-being of your staff and your company. Be sure to put a system in place for reporting and investigating incidents of harassment.

Here's a sexual harassment and discrimination statement example for your employee handbook.

[Company Name] is committed to preserving a working environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is against the law and is a form of gender discrimination. [Company Name] does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, sexual identity, race, religion, age, national origin, citizenship, veteran status, disability, or any other personal characteristic unrelated to an employee's ability to perform work requirements. The aim of this policy is to prevent harassment of any kind by anyone employed by or associated with the company.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or unwanted sexual attention by anyone associated with the company, whether male or female. Harassment may include references to employment status or conditions or may serve to create a hostile, intimidating, or uncomfortable work environment. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, obscene jokes, lewd comments, sexual depictions, repeated requests for dates, touching, staring, or other sexual conduct committed either on or off company premises.

All employees are responsible for helping to ensure that our workplace is kept free of harassment.

If you feel you have been a victim of sexual harassment or discrimination, report the behavior to any supervisor or member of the human resources department.

If you have witnessed sexual harassment or any form of harassment or discrimination, you also are urged to report the incident to human resources or management so that prompt action may be taken to investigate the matter.

All complaints will be treated seriously, kept as confidential as possible, and investigated fully. [Company Name] expressly forbids any retaliation against employees for reporting a sexual harassment incident.

If an investigation confirms that sexual harassment has occurred, immediate action will be taken to put an end

to the harassment. [Company Name] will take appropriate corrective actions against anyone found to be in violation of this policy, including potential termination of employment.

Flexible work arrangements policy

Flexible working arrangements are becoming increasingly popular. They help parents and disabled employees remain in the workforce. Flexible work hours or telecommuting opportunities are also becoming a popular perk for employees. Post-covid, employees have increasingly expressed a desire to have continued flexibility to work from home in at least some capacity.

Here's a flexible work arrangement policy example for your employee handbook.

[Company Name] offers flexible work arrangements as an alternative to a traditional work schedule. They provide you with options in the number of hours you work and where you work. The company will consider full or partial telecommuting arrangements.

You may request a flexible work arrangement when a traditional work schedule is not ideal for you. For example, you may need special hours to care for a child or other relative, to attend school, or to meet other personal demands. Flexible or remote work arrangements will also be considered as a form of reasonable accommodation if needed.

Not every job is suitable for a flexible work arrangement, so there is no assurance that an arrangement can be approved by your manager. An approved flexible work arrangement typically begins on a temporary basis to make sure that the arrangement is workable for you and for your area's business. Your manager and human resources representative will work with you to implement the arrangement.

Leave and time off policies

The next set of templates will cover policies related to time off or leave. If your company has already moved to an unlimited PTO policy, portions of this section may not be necessary such as the vacation, sick leave, and perhaps short-term optional leaves such as bereavement leave.

However, most employee handbooks do devote a large amount of space to leave policies. This is because there are a large number of employment laws allowing for paid and unpaid leave in different circumstances. Don't skip over these leaves, as they are all important, and having them all listed in one convenient place such as the handbook will help supervisors and staff reference them as needed when time off is requested.

Holidays

Be sure to customize this with your own list of observed holidays. The most common six holidays observed by companies have been included, but many employers choose to observe additional federal holidays.

Here's a holiday leave example for your employee handbook.

The company will observe the following days as paid holidays each year:

- New Year's Day.
- Memorial Day.
- Independence Day.
- Labor Day.
- Thanksgiving Day.
- Christmas Day.

If a holiday falls on a weekend, the holiday will be observed on the closest working day to the holiday.

Part-time employees will receive a paid day off if the holiday falls on a day that they would regularly be scheduled to work.

If a non-exempt employee is required to work on an observed holiday, they will be compensated at their normal rate of pay for the holiday plus one and one-half times their base rate for the time that they work.

Employees may use accrued PTO to take off holidays not observed by the company. Unpaid time off will also be granted to employees observing religious holidays if PTO is unavailable.

Vacation policy

Leave out the first paragraph if annual vacation leave varies by position, seniority, or if employees are able to negotiate additional vacation during the hiring process. Also, be aware that some states require vacation pay to be paid out upon termination.

Here's a vacation policy example for your employee handbook.

Each full-time employee may take vacation with full pay at such time as is mutually agreed upon between the employee and management. After one year of full-time employment, the employee accrues five working days of paid vacation annually; after two years, 10 days; after five years, 15 days; and after 10 years, 20 days. If an authorized holiday occurs within an employee's vacation period, equivalent time off with pay will be provided.

Full-time employees may carry over up to [X] days of vacation leave per calendar year. If not used, the remaining vacation time will be forfeited.

All vacation leave must have the prior approval of the employee's supervisor. Please check with your supervisor prior to making vacation plans. If you plan to take vacation during a popular travel time such as vacation or near a holiday, it is recommended that you provide as much advance notice as possible, as vacation requests are approved on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Jury duty

While it is common to provide paid leave to employees for Jury Duty service, it may not be required. Check the applicable state laws to determine if you need to pay employees serving jury duty. If you are not required to provide paid leave, you may elect to modify this template to state that employees can use PTO during their jury duty service dates.

Here's a jury duty policy example for your employee handbook.

The company encourages you to fulfill your right and duty as a citizen when you are called for jury duty. Time off will be granted for the duration of your jury duty. Please provide your jury duty summons to your supervisor as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made to cover your absence. You will receive your full salary for time spent on jury duty up to [X] business days. You will also be eligible for employee benefits as if you were actively employed during the full course of your jury duty. In the event that you are dismissed from jury duty early on any given day, you must report to work for the remainder of the workday.

Bereavement leave

Bereavement leave, in contrast to the other forms of leave included, is not required by law. However, it is common for businesses to voluntarily grant it.

Here's a bereavement leave policy example for your employee handbook.

Up to [X] days of paid leave may be taken in the event of the death of a spouse, offspring, sibling, parent, spouse's parent, grandparent, son- or daughter-in-law, or life partner of the employee. Exceptions may be granted by management under extenuating circumstances when requested by the employee. Please speak with your manager or a member of human resources to request bereavement leave or to seek an exception to the above-listed policy.

Military leave

Federal law requires that companies provide leave to members of the armed forces, and as such, it is a good idea to include military leave within your leave policies section of your employee handbook. Most frequently, short-term military leave will be requested by employees enlisted in the Reserves or National Guard while maintaining employment with your company.

Here's a military leave policy example for your employee handbook.

[Company Name]'s policy is to comply with all applicable laws that afford job protection rights and leave to employees serving with the Military, Military Reserve, or National Guard.

The company will supplement pay for up to two weeks per year for employees serving temporary military duty.

For active duty (such as during the war with Iraq) or enlistment, leave will be unpaid. Upon your return from military service, you may be eligible for reinstatement as provided in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Members of a Military Reserve or National Guard unit may have an annual training period. When an employee receives orders for such training, he or she should promptly notify the supervisor, detailing the duration of the required service. Regular pay minus military pay received for regularly scheduled workdays will be provided for up to two weeks.

If an employee so desires, he or she may use vacation time for military service. Any additional time needed for military service will be a leave of absence without pay. Should an employee be required to take an extended leave without pay to fulfill his or her military duty, eligibility for reinstatement after military duty or training is completed is determined in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Time off for voting

Time off for voting is required in many but not all states. Check your state and local laws to see whether time off for voting is required, whether it must be paid time off, and any notice requirements.

Here's a voting leave policy example for your employee handbook.

Employees will be given two hours off when necessary to vote in federal, local, or state elections. If you believe that you will not have sufficient time outside of work hours to vote, please notify your manager or the HR department at least 48 hours prior to election day.

Sick leave

Here's a sick leave policy example for your employee handbook.

Full-time employees accrue one day of paid sick leave at the end of each month, beginning with the first month of employment. Sick leave may be taken for any bona fide reason.

Up to [X] days of unused sick leave may be carried over from one calendar year to the next. Each employee is allowed a maximum of [X] sick days in any calendar year. Unused accrued sick leave will not be paid out upon termination.

FMLA

Here's an FMLA policy example for your employee handbook.

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) applies to private employers with over 50 employees within 75 miles, public agencies, and elementary and secondary schools. If you run a small business you may not be subject to FMLA yet.

FMLA-eligible employees may take unpaid leaves of absence for the following reasons:

Family leave. The birth of your child or the placement of a child in your home for adoption or foster care. FMLA family leave must conclude within 12 months after the birth or placement of your child.

Medical leave for yourself or family care. A serious medical condition of yourself or a family member (child, spouse, parent or one who stood in place of a parent).

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care, treatment, or supervision by a health care provider. A serious health condition includes any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or for prenatal care.

Any paid leave to which the employee is entitled at the time of the leave must be taken as part of the 12-week leave, with the remainder of the leave unpaid. In other words, if the employee is entitled to two paid weeks of vacation plus five sick days when he or she goes on leave and takes the full 12 weeks off, the employee will be paid for the first three weeks of leave and take the remaining nine weeks without pay.

You may take up to a total of 12 workweeks for family or medical leave in any 12-month period. A 12-month period is determined by reviewing the 12 months prior to the date the requested leave is to begin.

Eligibility: If you are an active employee, you are eligible for family and medical leave unless you have worked less than 1,250 hours during the 12-month period before the leave is to commence.

Procedures: After discussing your need for leave with your manager or supervisor, you should submit any request for an FMLA leave to the Human Resources Department at least 30 days prior to the date you wish to begin the leave if the need for leave is foreseeable.

Medical certification: Employees taking FMLA medical leave for self or family care must submit a medical certification to human resources.

Benefits and job continuation: All benefits, if you elect, will continue through the leave period. You must continue to contribute your share of any medical and insurance premiums. If you are using paid leave (i.e., vacation, sick leave, personal days) for your leave, you will continue to accrue vacation and sick leave, and you will be paid for holidays that occur during the paid portion of your leave. Vacation and sick leave will not accrue during any unpaid leave, and you will not be paid for holidays that occur during your leave. When you return from FMLA leave, you will be restored to the same or an equivalent job position, unless your position has been affected by a reduction in force, reorganization or other change that would have occurred had you not been on leave.

FMLA medical leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule when medically necessary, subject to medical certification. In such circumstances, [Company Name] may temporarily transfer you to an

alternative position for which you are qualified and that better accommodates the recurring periods of leave. If a transfer is made, your pay and benefits will not be reduced.

Domestic violence leave

Many states require employers to grant leave to those experiencing or escaping domestic violence. Even if it is not required, you may grant this at your discretion. This can be a kind policy to include in your handbook to show victims that the company will support them.

Here's a domestic violence leave policy example for your employee handbook.

Employees who are experiencing domestic violence and need time off to attend court proceedings or relocate to safe surroundings may take unpaid leave to do so. Employees requiring this leave should provide documentation of the abuse, such as police or medical reports. This documentation will be treated as confidential information. As with any other type of leave, the employee must provide an estimated date of return to work and provide status updates as soon as practicable

Creating your own employee handbook

These sample policies should give you a strong starting point for building out your own employee handbook for your company. However, it's important to remember that state and local laws may vary. These templates provide a general guide for US-based businesses creating policies, but it is always a good idea to check with a local attorney regarding any applicable laws in your region.

If you operate in multiple states with different branches, offices, or retail locations it is particularly important to ensure that your policies meet the legal requirements of all states where you are actively employing people. You may find that you need to create separate policies for different regions in some cases.

It is also a good idea to adjust these policies to suit the culture of your company. Company culture is grown through how you choose to communicate with employees and how they communicate with one another. Some organizations choose to have more relaxed or flexible policies as part of their company culture. Even simply going through the policy and adjusting the copy to better fit your company's voice can help integrate company culture. This handbook will be one of the first impressions new hires have of your company, as it is generally provided to them and reviewed on the first day of work, so use it as a vessel to promote your organization's mission and culture in addition to acting as a rulebook.

Additional resource: Updating your handbooks and company policies? Check our guide to [employee handbooks](#).