

Scripts for terminating an employee professionally

Terminating employees can be challenging, but having a script in place can make the process much easier. Whether it's your first time terminating an employee or you just want to make sure you're saying the right thing, you can use this information to have a better conversation with the employee you're terminating.

Tips before having the termination conversation

Before you have the official conversation to terminate an employee, you want to prepare accordingly.

Document everything

Employee termination shouldn't come out of the blue. You want to have a paper trail of performance evaluations, performance improvement plans, written warnings, and the like to highlight the actions taken leading up to the termination.

Not only does documenting everything give your employee a chance to improve if they're able and willing to, but it also protects you if there's a question around the reason behind the termination.

The only time when a paper trail isn't as important is when they perform an act so egregious that company policy calls for you to immediately fire someone.



Have an action plan

Since a termination meeting can be emotion-fueled for the employee, you want it to be concise and action-oriented. This is not the time to have a conversation in hopes of changing the decision.

You have to provide the employee with the necessary information they need to begin the separation process. It's essential that you are focused on the facts and achieving the goals of the meeting, so be sure to have that mindset. Though keep in mind it is okay (and recommended) that you have an empathetic and caring tone throughout the conversation.

Employee termination script

Beginning of the conversation

You want the beginning of the conversation to be straightforward. It's essential to be upfront regarding your reason for the meeting and understand you're firing them without leaving them hanging onto hope that you're having a conversation about allowing them to improve.

Here are some example scripts you can use:

Termination script for policy violation

- **Script:** NAME, your behavior was inappropriate on DATE and violated our policies and values. You are being terminated effective immediately.
- **Example:** Rhonda, your behavior was inappropriate on Monday, and it violated our company policies and values. Your position is being terminated immediately.

Termination script for layoffs

- **Script:** NAME, while we've appreciated your contributions to the company, after evaluating our current needs, we've discovered [REASON FOR ENDING EMPLOYMENT]. We regret to inform you that your position has been terminated, and your last day of employment will be on DATE.
- **Example:** Marcus, while we've appreciated your contributions to the company, after evaluating our current needs and recent budget cuts, we've discovered we no longer have the capacity to maintain your position. We regret to inform you that our position has been terminated, and your last day of employment will be on March 30.

Termination script for poor performance

- **Script:** NAME, we've previously discussed the importance of [WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED.] Unfortunately, while we've seen some improvements, it hasn't reached the level we need for this position. For that reason, we are terminating your position effective DATE.
- **Example:** Alea, we've previously discussed the importance of improving your job performance. Unfortunately, while we've seen some improvements, it hasn't reached the level we need for this position. For that reason, we are terminating your position effective immediately.

Continuing the conversation

Once the employee knows their position is being terminated, you'll need to continue the conversation to discuss the logistics. During this time, think about questions the employee might ask and have answers for them. This also gives the employee time to process what's taken place and gather their emotions before speaking.

Your employee will likely be upset, so continue to be straightforward and only focus on the most critical

information. Too much complex information is challenging to retain in a charged situation. Additionally, giving too many details may give a disgruntled employee material to file a lawsuit with, so only provide the necessary information.

Here are some example scripts you can use related to different issues you'll have to address.

Termination script

NAME, you'll receive your final paycheck in [TIME FRAME] via [METHOD]. It will include [ANYTHING THE FINAL CHECK INCLUDES].

On [DATE], be sure to turn in all company property, including your [COMPANY PROPERTY], at [LOCATION]. Also, at that time, ensure you have all of your belongings since you won't have access to the building after your last day of work.

Your medical insurance coverage ends in [NUMBER OF DAYS]. If you want to continue coverage with us, be sure to apply for COBRA to continue your coverage, or you can apply with the Healthcare Marketplace for an individual plan. You can speak to a member of our HR department to learn more.

That covers most of the important information regarding your termination. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them now or before your last day.

Termination script example

You'll receive your final paycheck in 7 business days via direct deposit. It will include your unused sick days, vacation time, and pay for the remainder of the time you work with us.

On your last day, be sure to turn in all company property, including your laptop, ID badge, and keys, at the security desk. Also, at that time, ensure you have all of your belongings since you won't have access to the building after your last day of work.

Your medical insurance coverage ends in 30 days. If you want to continue coverage with us, be sure to apply for COBRA to continue your coverage, or you can apply with the Healthcare Marketplace for an individual plan. You can speak to a member of our Human Resources department to learn more.

That covers most of the important information regarding your termination. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them now or before your last day.

Termination script for a severance package

We want to recognize the contributions you've made to the company by offering a severance package to include [DETAILS]. If you want to accept our proposed severance package, please sign this separation agreement.

Severance package termination example

We want to recognize the contributions you've made to the company by offering severance pay to include 3 months salary and full benefits. If you want to accept our proposed severance package, please sign this separation agreement.

How to manage the emotions of a terminated employee

Being terminated from your position — whatever the reason — is typically an emotional experience, and the

employee's response can vary widely. In preparation for the answer you might receive, you want to be prepared with scripts to manage their potentially emotional responses.

Along with the scripts listed below, here are some additional tips to keep in mind.

Be factual. While your employee might be angry or sad, you need to stick to the facts of the situation and not be sucked into an emotional conversation. If you become emotional along with them, you're likely to say something you'll regret.

Don't discuss others. Employees who are terminated often want to discuss their co-workers who might be exhibiting similar behaviors in the event of termination due to poor performance or are in the same department in the event of termination due to layoffs. In either case, only discuss the employee you're meeting about. It's not appropriate or necessary for you to discuss others.

Stick to your decision. No matter their response, you want to stick to your decision and be clear about it. Don't act like you might be able to give them another chance or speak to someone about helping them keep their job. Again, the termination meeting is your chance to let them know they're losing their job, communicate important information and answer any relevant questions. That's it. Giving them hope will only make it worse for them and the company.

If they begin shouting...

I understand you're upset by this decision, but shouting is not going to help. I'd like for us to end your employment on good terms because I wish you well in the future. To do so, we need to be able to speak at a lower volume.

If they begin crying...

I understand this is a difficult time. Please take these tissues and water, and I'll give you the time you need to collect yourself.

If they begin displaying violent behavior...

I understand this is a difficult time, but violence is unacceptable, and you must stop immediately. I will contact a member of security to sit in on the rest of this meeting with us, take you to gather your remaining items, and escort you to your vehicle to keep everyone safe.

If they ask about another employee...

I didn't call this meeting to discuss anyone else.

If they state that their performance issues were improving...

While your performance did improve, it still fails to meet our company standards. We appreciate the strides you took to do better, but we need an employee in this position who can at least meet our minimum standards, and you're unable to do so at this time. For that reason, we are terminating your position.

If they believe it's a case of wrongful termination...

Here are a few examples to use.

- Your termination comes as a result of a documented history of performance problems and nothing else.
- Your termination is simply a result of layoffs. We had to make a difficult decision, and your position had to

be cut.

- Your termination comes as a result of your company policy violation. We had no other choice but to terminate you according to company policy.

If they ask why they're being terminated...

As I stated at the beginning of the meeting, you're being terminated due to poor performance. Now is not the time to go into detail about the reason behind your termination. I want to provide you with the information you need to navigate through this time effectively.

If they promise to do better...

I understand your commitment to performing better, but we've passed the time for that. At this point, you are being terminated, and we just need to ensure all of the details are ironed out.

What to avoid including in your employee termination script

Now that you understand what to say during an employee termination meeting, here's a cheat sheet of what you want to avoid.

- **I'm Sorry.** The only time you might want to apologize is when the employee is being laid off but was a great employee. Other than that, it's inappropriate and doesn't help the situation.
- **Compliments.** While you might be tempted to use pleasantries to make the situation feel better for the employee, it's confusing to offer compliments and typically won't come across as you intend.
- **A Friendly Tone.** It's essential to be businesslike during your termination meeting. Now is not the time to try to be friendlier to make the conversation easier. You want to stick to the facts and be professional throughout the discussion.