

Lesson 4 Key Takeaways: Document Performance With Precision — The When, What & How

Why Document?

Good documentation provides employers with accurate records and outlines the reasons behind your decisions as a manager. Some of the benefits of solid documentation:

- Serves as evidence in court
- Shows proof of a consistent work environment
- Establishes credibility

What to Document

Good documentation provides a comprehensive view of the employee's work, good and bad. So, it's important to document both successes and failures.

In the event of a complaint, thorough documentation describes:

- The original complaint
- The response
- The steps taken to resolve the issue

The Do's / Don'ts to Documentation

Do's:

- Do state what happened. Be specific.
- Do state what policy the employee violated, attaching a copy of the policy.
- Do provide context by indicating why the violation harms the company.
- Do provide specific instructions on how the employee can improve.
- Do indicate clear consequences.
- Do issue reprimands consistently. Everyone needs to be held to the same standard.
- Do follow up. The appropriate follow-up depends on the circumstances.

When to Document

Documentation should be done at the time the event happens and provide a **clear, specific and factual** account of the event.

Always document:

1. Coaching efforts
2. Performance reviews
3. Discipline
4. Termination
5. Complaints
6. Claims

How to Use Documentation

Documenting events throughout the review period provides an accurate record of the employee's performance for you to reference when preparing their performance review, creating goals or mapping the employee's career path for the coming year.

The Do's / Don'ts to Documentation

Don't's:

- Don't be too vague.
- Don't be too specific. Over-documenting can appear to be nit-picking.
- Don't issue a reprimand or terminate an employee without a witness.
- Don't forget to file the documentation in the employee's personnel file.
- Don't forget the employee signature line. If the employee refuses to sign, indicate that on the document with a witness's signature.