

Who should be involved in the meeting?

Include key leadership in the meeting. At least two members of your leadership team should be in attendance:

- **Direct Leader:** This is the leader who has managed the employee's performance and delivered previous corrective action discussions. This person will be leading the meeting.
- **HR Leader or Executive Level Leader:** This person will serve as a witness.

What should I say? (Direct Leader)

Deliver the news quickly and definitively. Any pleasantries could distract from the message and could create confusion that this is a performance conversation rather than a termination action. Focus on stating the facts, who, what, when and why.

- **Who:** *"Joe/Jane..."*
- **What:** *"You are being terminated"*
- **When:** *"Effective immediately"*
- **Why:** *"Your (attendance/performance/safety) is not meeting expectations."*
Tell the employee the reason for the termination in clear terms. This is not the time to skirt around the issue to attempt to soften the blow. There is no need to go through a step-by-step analysis of the documentation supporting the reason for discharge. A short, clear statement of the reason for termination is sufficient.
- **Leadership Agreement Statement:** *"We have agreed as a leadership team on this matter. The decision is final."*

Share Logistical Information (HR Leader or Executive Level Leader)

Review with the employee a written summary of benefits. This summary should include, where applicable, severance pay, pending bonus or commission payments, compensation for unused vacation and sick time (consult the [Vacation Pay Laws by State](#) document for more information), continuation of health and life insurance benefits, COBRA, and other benefits.

- *"Your final paycheck will be issued on DATE XX covering payment through today."* Refer to and follow the [Final Pay by State](#) guidelines.
 - If applicable, *"You will receive information about COBRA directly from our benefits provider in the next few weeks."*
 - Refer to your Employee Policy Guide and share company policies for Paid Time Off guidelines.
"Your vacation and paid time off will be paid out in your final paycheck."
"Your vacation and paid time off will not be paid out in accordance with our company policy."
 - *"Your commissions/bonus will be paid out on DATE XX."*
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- If terminating a leader and using a separation agreement, then:
"I also have a separation agreement for you. If you sign the separation agreement, the company will provide you with a severance payment of \$XX.XX AMOUNT. Before you sign, you may review the agreement. The separation agreement expires in XX days, so please let us know your decision as soon as possible."
- Inform the employee how to collect his or her personal belongings.
"If you'd like to take your personal belongings home right now, I can help you collect them from your desk. Or if you would rather, we can set up a time to collect them after hours or send them to your home address."
- If applicable, outline the steps to return company property including ID, keys, credit cards, laptop, phone, uniform, etc. (Review the [Pre-Termination Checklist](#))
"Please leave your laptop and keycard at your desk."

End the Meeting (Direct Leader)

"If you have any questions, you may contact me or our HR team directly."

- Escort employee from the building, being careful to minimize disruptions to other employees.

Important notes to keep in mind:

- It can be easy to make excuses, apologize, or give advice to the employee because we feel uncomfortable. Remove as much emotion as possible and stick with the facts.
 - Even if the termination is not a complete surprise (which it shouldn't be if you have followed a progressive disciplinary process), the employee will likely be in a state of shock. Walk them through the process with compassion. Think of how you would hope to be treated if you were in their shoes.
 - You may be tempted to skip steps in the process, such as escorting the employee out of the office or staying with them while they pack up their personal belongings, but skipping steps is not recommended. It is in your best interest to remain with the employee from the termination meeting until they exit the building, no matter how much you feel you can trust the individual.
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