

How to raise a problem at work

1. Have an informal chat with your employer

If you have a problem at work it's normally better to raise it informally with your employer first.

You may feel nervous about raising an issue, but employers are often open to resolving problems quickly without going through a formal process.

Try and find someone you feel comfortable talking to. If this is not your manager, try talking to someone else (such as another manager or the human resources team, if there is one).

An informal chat can range from a quiet word to a more structured meeting. If a meeting is set up you can ask a colleague to come with you if you feel you do not want to go alone. At this stage your employer does not have to agree to this.

When an informal chat is not the best option

For some serious issues, such as sexual harassment or [whistleblowing](#), an informal chat is not the best approach. You should instead [make a formal complaint to your employer](#).

2. What to discuss if a meeting is set up

If a meeting is set up, you should:

- check the relevant facts on the Acas website
- prepare what you want to say, for example how to explain what you're unhappy about
- think about what you'd like your employer to do

In the meeting you can:

- explain what the problem is and what you think should happen
- show your manager evidence if necessary, for example your payslips and contract if you think your holiday pay was wrong
- take notes if you want to remember what was said

Resolving the issue should be a 2-way process – your manager should allow you to explain the problem and likewise you should listen to what they have to say.

It may not always be possible to solve the problem in the way you'd like, but hopefully you can find a solution that works for both of you.

3. Make a formal complaint to your employer

Sometimes an issue cannot be resolved informally and you may need to make a formal complaint to your employer, known as [raising a grievance](#).

Check if your employer has a formal grievance process you can follow.

If not you should provide your employer with:

- details of your complaint in writing
- any evidence to support your complaint, for example your payslips or employment contract
- what you would like your employer to do

They should look into the issue you've raised and set up a formal meeting. You have the right to get someone to go with you, for example a trade union representative.

Once your employer has discussed the issue with you and reviewed any evidence, they will make a decision. You can appeal if you do not agree with that decision. Your appeal must be in writing. You have the right to be accompanied during any appeal meetings.

Related content

[Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide](#)

4. Make a claim to an employment tribunal

If you cannot come to an agreement with your employer, you might be able to make a claim to an employment tribunal.

You need to [tell Acas you're going to make a claim](#). You'll be offered the option of 'early conciliation'. This is a free service to help you resolve the issue before it ends up at tribunal.

There is normally a time limit for making a claim. For example, if you think your employer should not have made a deduction from your wages, you need to make a claim within 3 months of the deduction.