

Disciplinary procedure: step by step

A disciplinary procedure is a formal way for an employer to deal with an employee's:

- unacceptable or improper behaviour ('misconduct')
- performance ('capability')

Before starting a disciplinary procedure, the employer should first see whether the problem can be resolved in an informal way. This can often be the quickest and easiest solution.

The employer could try solving the issue with their employee by:

- privately talking with them and any other staff involved
- listening to their point of view
- agreeing improvements to be made
- setting up a training or development plan, if it's a performance issue

Dealing with capability issues

Capability or performance is about an employee's ability to do the job.

Some employers might have a separate [procedure for dealing with capability or performance issues](#) that should be based on:

- support
- training
- encouragement to improve

Whether the employer deals with the issue under a capability or disciplinary procedure, they must do so fairly.

What counts as misconduct

Misconduct is when an employee's inappropriate behaviour or action breaks workplace rules.

Some misconduct examples include:

- bullying
- harassment
- refusing to do work ('insubordination')
- being [absent without permission](#) (some people call it absent without leave or 'AWOL')

But your workplace might have its own examples.

If misconduct happens outside the workplace

An employee could face disciplinary action for misconduct outside work.

For example, where an employee's behaviour in front of external clients at the work Christmas party reflects badly on the company.

It depends on how serious the employer sees the misconduct and whether it could have a bad effect on the business.

It's important the employer carries out a thorough investigation and can show the effect on the business.

When there is gross misconduct

Some acts count as 'gross misconduct' because they are very serious or have very serious effects.

If an employer finds there has been gross misconduct, they should still carry out an investigation and the full disciplinary procedure. They might then decide on dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Examples of gross misconduct in the workplace could include:

- fraud
- physical violence
- serious lack of care to duties or other people ('gross negligence')
- serious insubordination

What is seen as gross misconduct can depend on the business, so your workplace might have its own policy or rules with examples.