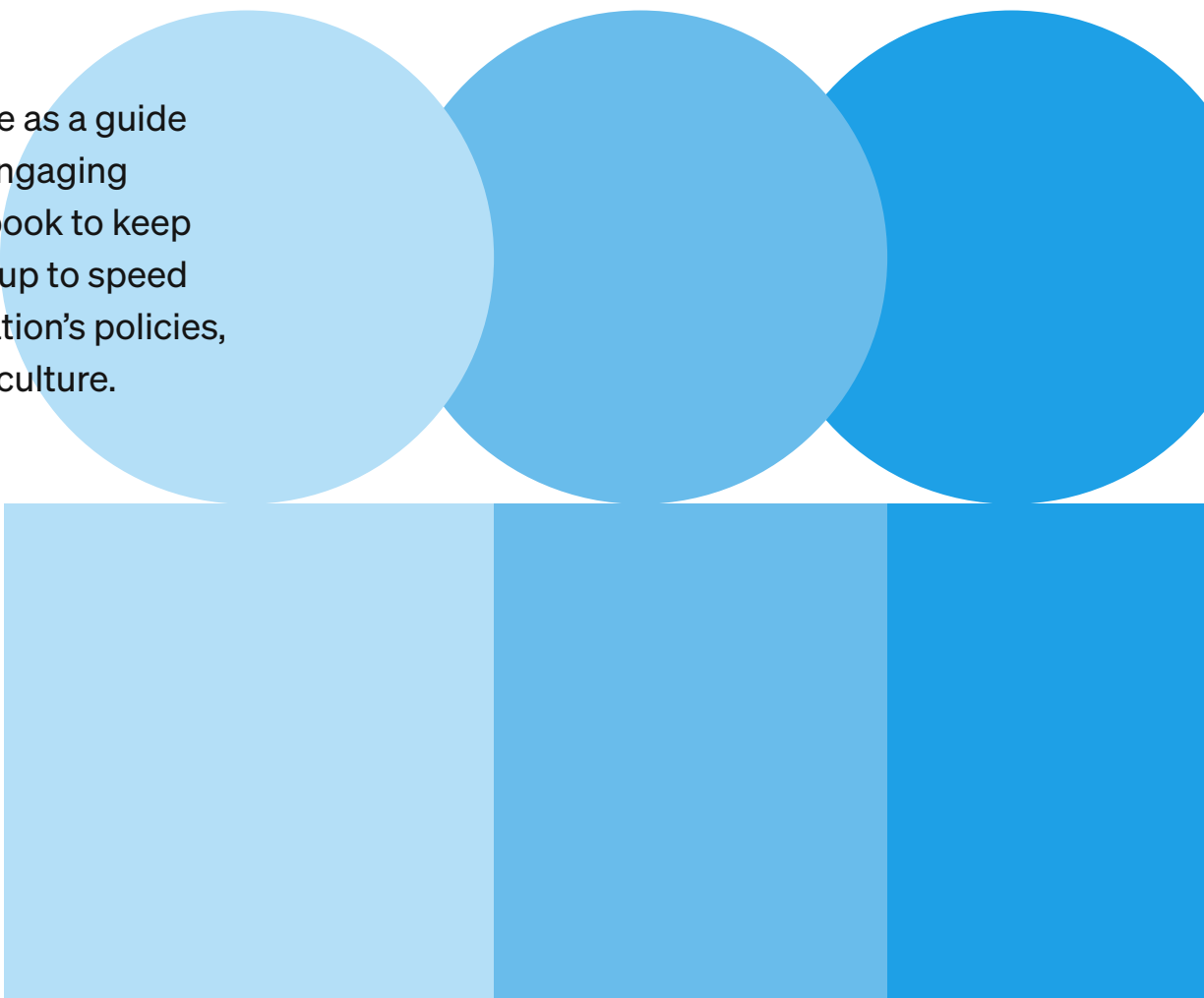


Free employee handbook template



Use this template as a guide for creating an engaging employee handbook to keep your employees up to speed on your organization's policies, procedures and culture.



Note:

This template provides examples for U.S. employees. Be sure to reference legal requirements for regions/countries outside the U.S. if applicable.

Company history, mission, vision and values

Provide detail on the company's history, mission, vision and values — focus on culture and what employees can expect. This section sets the tone for a culture-first company.

What to include

- ↳ Mission and vision statements
- ↳ Company timeline
- ↳ Historical (but fun!) pictures
- ↳ Video (digital handbook)



Tip

- ↳ Add a video from employees talking about what the company culture means to them and how they live your values.
- ↳ Include stories to illustrate how your culture elevates the employee experience.

What not to include

- ↳ Too much historical detail — you want to keep employees engaged and focused on moving forward (both through the handbook and within your organization)

↳ History & Vision

Share how/why you started and where you're going.

↳ Mission

Add your mission statement.

↳ Values

Outline core values and how they shape culture.

Employment relationship



Tip

- Remember remote employees, considering how the rules and norms for in-house employees differ for remote workers.
- If you have an FAQ section, include the “why” and “what if.”
 - Why do we have a code of conduct?
 - What happens if I violate the conduct rules?
- Consider defining the appeals process.

Clarify the nature of the employment relationship, including employment-at-will status, if applicable. Outline the expectations for professionalism and behavior for every employee. Be cautious with tone, striking a balance that covers the company legally but doesn't contradict the cultural vibe you want to project.

What to include

- At-will statement (if applicable)
- Non-solicitation policies
- Descriptions of legal employment types/statuses
- Confidentiality agreements
- Legal language as required by local, state and federal guidelines
- Zero-tolerance policies. What employee behaviors require immediate dismissal under company policy?
- A notice that these policies are subject to change

What not to include

- Overly prohibitive language that doesn't include the “why”

Sample employment status

In this section, you will learn the types of employment at [organization].

Types of employment:

- Full-time employees work at least 30 hours per week or 130 hours per month.
- Part-time employees are those who work fewer than 30 hours weekly.
- Full-time employees are entitled to our company's full benefits package.
- Freelancers are 1099 contractors hired on an as-needed basis.

Location of employment:

Your employment will be in-office, hybrid, or remote as defined under your offer letter employment agreement.

- In-office employees work at our corporate location (address).
- Hybrid employees work three days in the corporate location (Monday, Wednesday and Friday).
- Remote employees telecommute. While they may be required to attend an in-person office meeting periodically, these employees operate from a home office other than our corporate location.

Employment status

Define employee types/statuses for your organization.

Sample at-will statement

Employment with [organization] is for no specific time. Your employment with (company) will be “at will,” meaning that either you or (company) may terminate employment at any time for any reason, with or without cause. Any contrary representations that may have been made to you are superseded by this agreement. Although your job duties, title, compensation, and benefits, as well as (company’s) personnel policies and procedures, may change, the “at will” nature of your employment will not.*

*A reminder to check local and state laws and with legal counsel when drafting these documents. Some states have limitations and restrictions to at-will employment.

Sample EEO statement

[Organization] provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

Sample diversity statement

[Organization] values and promotes diversity in the workplace. Diversity refers to human differences in the workplace, including those based on culture, ethnicity, gender, and age. [Organization] believes that promoting diversity is important for attracting the widest pool of qualified applicants, fostering greater innovation and creativity, and enhancing our communication and relationships with customers and the community.

[Organization] is committed to enhancing our diversity and demonstrating that commitment to our employees, customers, and community. [Organization] promotes diversity by developing policies, programs, and procedures that foster a work environment in which differences are respected and all employees are treated fairly.

↳ At-will statement

Add the at-will statement for your organization, if applicable.

↳ EEO statement

Add the Equal Employment Opportunity statement for your organization.

↳ Diversity statement

Add the diversity statement for your organization.



Company policies

This section can include internal behavioral requirements and rules related to legal requirements.

Code of conduct

Define expected behavior, ethical standards and workplace etiquette. Outline progressive discipline procedures and establish HR as the go-to resource for new employees.

What to include

- ↳ Values, ethical behaviors and the responsibilities and rights of employees
- ↳ Acceptable internal company conduct, such as when to take lunch or if you can use your personal devices during work hours
- ↳ Acceptable external conduct, such as best practices for handling customers, client privacy, or defining a conflict of interest
- ↳ Acceptable behaviors and actions, including professionalism standards, workplace safety, or the mention of work when using social media
- ↳ What is considered misconduct, including abuse or assault, harassment, bullying, discrimination, intoxication, etc. Clearly outline the company's stance against discrimination and harassment, including reporting procedures.
- ↳ Dress code. For example:
 "Our company attire is dress casual. Please avoid clothing with political slogans, holes, rips or tears."
 "Safety first. Always wear appropriate safety gear while on the job."



Tip

- ↳ Consider a disclaimer. For example:
 "While our policy includes business attire as outlined, if you feel the company dress code directly interferes with the tenets of your faith or lifestyle choices, please contact human resources immediately."

Sample anti-discrimination policy

[Organization] is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate and will take affirmative action to ensure against discrimination in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, gender, or sex.

- ↳ Anti-discrimination policy

Add your organization's anti-discrimination policy here.

Sample anti-harassment policy

[Organization] is committed in all areas to providing a work environment free from harassment. Harassment based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion or any other legally protected characteristics will not be tolerated. All employees, including supervisors and other management personnel, must abide by this policy. No person will be adversely affected in employment with (company) as a result of bringing complaints of unlawful harassment.

Sample sexual harassment policy

Sexual harassment is behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome and offensive to the person or persons it is targeted toward. Examples of harassing behavior may include unwanted physical contact, foul language of an offensive sexual nature, sexual propositions, sexual jokes or remarks, obscene gestures, and displays of pornographic or sexually explicit pictures, drawings, or caricatures. Use of (company) computer system to view, display, or disseminate material that is sexual in nature may also constitute harassing behavior.

Sample policy for reporting discrimination or harassment

If an employee feels that they have been harassed based on their sex, race, national origin, ethnic background, age, or any other legally protected characteristic, they should immediately report the matter to their supervisor. If that person is not available, or if the employee feels it would be unproductive to inform that person, the employee should immediately contact that supervisor's superior or human resources. Once the matter has been reported it will be promptly investigated, and any necessary corrective action will be taken where appropriate. All complaints of unlawful harassment will be handled in as discreet and confidential a manner as is possible under the circumstances.

Any employee engaging in improper harassing behavior will be subject to disciplinary action, including the possible termination of employment. These procedures as outlined are not intended to replace or limit the rights of any employee so seek remedy under available state or federal laws.

↳ Anti-harassment policy Add your organization's anti-harassment policy here.

↳ Sexual harassment policy Add your organization's sexual harassment policy here.

↳ Reporting discrimination/harassment Add your reporting policy here.

Work hours and attendance

This section should define working hours, break times, overtime and attendance expectations. It should establish rules around reporting absences and the consequences of unreported absences.

Sample work hours/attendance policy

[Organization] values the punctuality and attendance of our employees. Regular attendance ensures high-quality customer service and lessens the productivity burden on your teammates.

We've established the following attendance policies to ensure everyone understands our expectations and to provide guidelines for managing absences and tardiness.

These policies do not apply to absences covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or leave provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They do not apply to freelance or remote employees.

▸ Work hours and attendance Add your organization's work hours and attendance policy.

Sample general policies around work hours and attendance

- ▾ Regular working hours are from (time) Monday through
- ▾ Friday, with a one-hour (paid/unpaid) lunch break as established by your manager.
- ▾ Employees are expected to arrive at the workplace at their scheduled time.
- ▾ Tardiness is defined as being more than 15 minutes late to work without prior notification or approval from a manager.
- ▾ If you cannot arrive on time, it's critical to notify your manager before your scheduled start time.
- ▾ Any unplanned absences or tardiness may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- ▾ Planned absences, such as vacations or medical appointments, must be approved by a manager in advance.
- ▾ If an employee cannot come to work due to illness, they must provide a doctor's note upon returning to work.
- ▾ This attendance policy may be revised or updated at any time at management's discretion.

▸ General work hours and attendance policies Add general work hours and attendance policies.

Leave policies

This section can address vacation, sick policies and other types of leave available to employees. Make sure to define these policies by the type of employment contract so there is no misunderstanding.

What to include

- ↳ Paid versus unpaid time off
- ↳ Overtime policies
- ↳ Holidays and who is eligible for paid time off
- ↳ Sick leave
- ↳ Long-term illness
- ↳ Bereavement leave
- ↳ Leave of absence/sabbatical
- ↳ Jury duty and voting
- ↳ Parental leave
- ↳ Paternity and maternity leave
- ↳ Steps for terminating employment

Sample paid time off language

Your mental and physical health is important to us. That's why we offer full-time employees paid time off (PTO). We encourage all employees to take their PTO each year!

Full-time employees receive (X days) of PTO per year. PTO accrual begins the day you join (organization), and employees working 40 hours receive (X days per month.) Full-time employees earn one additional day per year after their first year of employment.

You can take your PTO any time after your first 90 days of employment. A manager must approve all vacation time in advance. You (can/cannot) transfer any remaining PTO to the following year.

According to local law, we may compensate accrued PTO with your final paycheck if you leave our company. When the law doesn't have provisions, we pay accrued leave to employees who were not terminated for cause.

↳ Leave policies

Add your organization's leave policies.

Performance expectations

Communicate work expectations, including reviews, goals and professional development opportunities. You can include links to departmental job descriptions or performance review forms. If you have a rewards program, you can outline it here and/or share the consequences of failing to meet performance goals.

Sample performance expectations language

At (organization), we believe in fostering an excellence and continuous growth culture. Our success is built upon the dedication and performance of each team member. To ensure a clear understanding of work expectations, we have outlined comprehensive performance expectations to guide employees through their professional journey.

↳ Performance expectations Add your organization's performance expectations.

Sample performance reviews language

Regular performance reviews are an integral part of our commitment to employee development. These evaluations provide a platform for open communication between employees and managers, allowing for constructive feedback, goal setting, and recognition of achievements. We encourage employees to actively engage in these reviews, discussing their accomplishments, challenges and aspirations.

↳ Performance reviews Add information about performance reviews.

Sample goals and objectives language

Setting and achieving meaningful goals is essential for personal and organizational success. We encourage employees to establish both short-term and long-term goals aligned with their roles and the company's objectives. Managers will work collaboratively with their team members to define clear, measurable, and achievable goals that contribute to professional development and overall company success.

↳ Goals and objectives Add information about goals and objectives.

Sample language for professional development opportunities

We are committed to providing employees with opportunities for continuous learning and growth. [Organization] offers various professional development programs, workshops, and training sessions to enhance skills and knowledge. Additionally, we encourage employees to take advantage of external resources, conferences, and certifications that align with their career aspirations.

↳ Professional development opportunities Add information about professional development opportunities.

Wages and compensation

Use this section to detail your organization's policies around wages and compensation. This is another opportunity to show employees how much you value them and motivate them to stick with you.

What to include

- ↳ Compensation structure
- ↳ Performance-based compensation
- ↳ When employees are paid
- ↳ Rules around payroll deductions
- ↳ Promotions
- ↳ Salary adjustments
- ↳ Referral bonuses, if applicable
- ↳ Other bonuses, if applicable
- ↳ Statement about fairness and transparency
- ↳ Statement about wage equality
- ↳ How to provide feedback



Tip

If your organization has earned praise for pay equity, its internal promotion rate or other compensation-related factor, consider mentioning it here.

What not to include

- ↳ Specific compensation package details

Sample general wages and compensation language

At [organization], we value the contributions of every team member and are committed to fostering an environment where individual efforts are recognized and rewarded. This section outlines our wage policies and the correlation between performance and compensation.

Sample language about salary adjustments and bonuses

Based on the outcome of performance reviews and the achievement of established goals, salary adjustments and bonuses may be awarded. These adjustments reflect your performance, contributions to team success, and adherence to company values.

Sample compensation structure language

We maintain a competitive and fair compensation structure designed to attract and retain top talent. Full and part-time employees, whether on-site or remote, receive a base salary or hourly wage and, where applicable, additional benefits such as bonuses, commissions, and other incentives. 1099 freelance contractors are paid an hourly wage. The details of your specific compensation package are outlined in your employment offer.

Sample fairness and transparency language

Our organization is dedicated to maintaining fairness and transparency in our compensation practices. If you have any questions about your compensation or the criteria used for performance assessments, please consult with your manager or the Human Resources department for clarification.

Sample performance-based compensation language

We believe in recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance. We implement a performance-based compensation system to align your compensation with your contributions. This system may include performance reviews, individual and team goals, and other metrics that contribute to the company's overall success.

Sample language about wage equality

[Organization] is committed to promoting wage equality and ensuring that all employees are compensated fairly for their skills and contributions. We regularly review and adjust our compensation practices to align with industry standards and promote an inclusive workplace.

Sample communication and feedback language

We encourage open communication regarding compensation and performance. If you seek clarification on your compensation package or have suggestions for improvement, we value your input. Feel free to engage in constructive conversations with your manager or the Human Resources department.

Benefits and perks

Provide detailed information about employee benefits, including health insurance, retirement plans and any other perks the organization offers.

What to include

- ↳ Benefits eligibility
- ↳ Bonuses
- ↳ COBRA
- ↳ Educational assistance
- ↳ Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ↳ Employee expense reimbursement
- ↳ Employee discounts
- ↳ Health, dental, vision, disability, life, or other insurance coverage
- ↳ Legal aid (paid)
- ↳ Pay schedules
- ↳ Perks like a home office stipend for remote or hybrid employees
- ↳ Retirement benefits
- ↳ Stock options
- ↳ Supplemental insurance
- ↳ Time tracking
- ↳ Workers' compensation
- ↳ Unemployment assistance



Tip

- ↳ Spice up this section with video or graphics that highlight popular perks
- ↳ Include employee quotes that attest to the value of their benefits package

What not to include

- ↳ Specific compensation package details

Sample benefits and perks language

[Organization] shall provide a competitive package of benefits to all eligible full-time and part-time employees. The following outline of available benefits is provided with the understanding that benefit plans may change from time to time, and the plan brochures (known as Summary Plan Descriptions) or contracts are to be considered the final word on the terms and conditions of the employee benefits provided by [Organization]. For eligibility requirements, refer to the Plan document for each benefit program. Continuation of any benefits after termination of employment will be solely at the employee's expense and only if permitted by policies and statutes.

↳ Benefits and perks

Add information about your organization's benefits and perks.

Technology and social media

Detail guidelines on the use of company technology, communication tools and social media.

What to include

- ↳ Your expectations for mentioning the organization or your work in social media
- ↳ Define official vs. unofficial activity on social media. (Hint: Unofficial is anything an employee does during their off hours, or if they are not authorized to speak for the company.)
- ↳ What the organization defines as social media
- ↳ What the organization defines as a trade secret
- ↳ Rules and consequences for posting sensitive or confidential company information
- ↳ What is allowed? For example, if an employee praises your company and shares how much they enjoy working for you, do you really want them to stop?
- ↳ Provide specific examples of what is acceptable and what is not

What not to include

- ↳ Generally prohibiting social media posts about work
- ↳ Restricting employees from connecting

Sample general language for technology and social media policy

During working hours, the company only permits employees to use cell phones, social media, or the internet for personal use during breaks. When posting company-related content on social media, employees must express that they're posting on their behalf, not the company. The opinions they express should be respectful of the company. If an employee has a comment or concern about the company, they should bring it up to their manager or human resources rather than posting it online.

Sample social media policy

Social media is a hugely influential tool. Here are some practical tips to prevent careless use of social media at work:

- ↳ You may access personal accounts at work. We expect you to act responsibly, according to company policies to ensure productivity and avoid getting sidetracked by your social platforms.
- ↳ Ensure your social followers understand that your personal account or statements don't represent our organization. Use a disclaimer such as "opinions are my own."
- ↳ Avoid sharing intellectual property or confidential information. Ask your manager or the marketing team before resharing or posting any company information that isn't officially announced publicly.
- ↳ Avoid defamatory, offensive, or derogatory content. You may violate the company's anti-harassment policies by directing this content towards colleagues or customers.

↳ Technology and social media policy

Add your organization's technology and social media policy.

Safety and security

Outline workplace safety protocols, emergency procedures and security measures to ensure the well-being of employees.



Tip

Include any guidelines you might have related to COVID-19 safety — and link to that information on your organization's intranet.

What to include

- ↳ General workplace safety protocols
- ↳ Information about security training, if applicable
- ↳ Information about personal protective equipment (PPE), if applicable
- ↳ Emergency procedures and evacuation plans
- ↳ Emergency contacts
- ↳ Access control and identification badges, if applicable
- ↳ Employee responsibility
- ↳ How to report safety concerns

Sample language for generic workplace safety

The well-being of our employees is our top priority. We are committed to providing a safe and secure working environment. This section outlines the safety protocols, emergency procedures and security measures to protect you during your time with us.

Sample language for reporting safety concerns

Report any potential safety hazards or concerns to your supervisor immediately. We encourage proactively identifying and addressing potential risks to ensure the safety of everyone in the workplace.

Sample language about employee responsibility

Each employee is crucial in maintaining a safe and secure workplace. You are responsible for following safety guidelines, adhering to security measures, and actively participating in emergency drills and training exercises.

↳ Safety and security

Add your organization's safety and security information.

Compliance and legal information

This section covers information on legal requirements, compliance with labor laws, and any industry-specific regulations that employees need to be aware of. You might also include steps for reporting policy violations here.



Tip

- ⏮ Remember each policy in the handbook has legal implications. Make sure it's spelled out that these policies are subject to change.
- ⏮ Don't create a rigid template if you operate across state lines. Instead, personalize by region and state to stay in compliance with shifting regulatory rules. This is a good reason to create these documents digitally and not manually!

Sample language for compliance and legal information

This employee handbook is not a contract. The company can change the handbook at any time, for any reason. Employment with the company is at-will. That means the company can change employment terms and terminate at any time, for any legal reason. No employee other than the head of the company can bind the company for anything other than at-will employment. Any employment contract must be in writing and signed by the head of the HR department/hiring department/organization.

⏮ Compliance and legal information

Add compliance and legal information for your organization.

Acknowledgment and agreement

Include a section where employees can acknowledge that they have read and understood the handbook. This can be important in case of any disputes.



Tip

- ↳ Let employees know how they can access the employee handbook at any time — like a dynamic electronic copy on the company intranet or a printed copy in the office break room.

Sample acknowledgment form

I, _____ have read and understand the contents of this Employee Handbook and acknowledge that I am expected to follow the policies and procedures outlined in it. I understand that the contents may change, but HR will notify me of any changes that occur.

If at any time I do not understand the contents of the Employee Handbook or the expectations placed on me as an (company) employee, I will contact my immediate supervisor or HR for clarification.

As an at-will employee, I understand that signing this acknowledgement does not constitute a contract for employment.

Signature _____

Date _____

HR Signature _____

↳ Acknowledgment and agreement

Add your organization's acknowledgment and agreement form.

Appendices

Attach any additional documents or forms relevant to the handbook, such as insurance, training or certification materials, reimbursement forms, payroll deduction change form and more.

About Simpplr

Simpplr is the modern intranet that transforms the work experience for all employees — wherever and however they work. Simpplr is the only platform that unifies employee engagement, enablement and services, leveraging state-of-the-art AI models to deliver a seamless, cohesive and personalized employee experience.

Trusted by over 1000 global brands, including Moderna, Snowflake, Splunk, Penske, Eurostar and AAA, Simpplr customers achieve significant improvement in their employees' productivity, retention and overall satisfaction. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA, Simpplr is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Sapphire Ventures, Salesforce Ventures, Tola Capital and Still Venture Capital.

Learn more at simpplr.com