Grievance letters

Templates for employers in England, Wales and Scotland handling an individual employee's formal grievance

Checked 15 November 2026 against the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures (paragraphs 1 to 4 and 32 to 47), the Employment Relations Act 1999 (sections 10 and 13), the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (section 207A), the Equality Act 2010 (sections 27, 40A and 123) and the Employment Rights Act 1996 (section 43B). Electra HR, electra-hr.com. General information, not legal advice on a particular case.

Before you send any letter

Remove the pink employer instructions, complete every placeholder in square brackets, delete the alternatives you are not using, and check all dates, names and enclosures.

These letters are for an individual employee's formal grievance. Take advice instead if the grievance is raised during a disciplinary or dismissal process, alleges discrimination or sexual harassment that could lead to a claim, reports wrongdoing (a possible protected disclosure), is a collective grievance raised by a representative, or the employee has already resigned or started a tribunal claim.

The rules

- Where appropriate, consider informal resolution or voluntary mediation by someone not involved. An employee may raise a grievance formally without first trying informal resolution. A formal grievance should be raised in writing and without unreasonable delay, with a manager who is not the subject of it (Acas Code, paras 32 and 33).
- Hold a formal meeting without unreasonable delay after you receive the grievance. Let the employee explain the grievance and how they think it should be resolved, and adjourn for any investigation needed (paras 33 and 34).
- Right to be accompanied: a worker invited to a grievance hearing about a duty the employer owes them, and who reasonably asks, can bring one companion: a fellow worker, a trade union official, or a certified trade union representative (Employment Relations Act 1999, ss10 and 13(5)). The companion can put and sum up the worker's case, respond on their behalf to views expressed at the meeting, and confer with them; they do not have an automatic right to answer questions directed to the worker. If the companion cannot attend, you must postpone to a reasonable time the worker proposes within five working days after the day you proposed (s10(4) and (5)).
- Give the outcome in writing without unreasonable delay, say what action you will take, and tell the employee they can appeal (para 40).
- Appeals: hear them without unreasonable delay, impartially and wherever possible by a manager not previously involved. The right to be accompanied applies, and the appeal outcome must be in writing (paras 41 to 45).

- The Code sets the standard. A tribunal can increase an award by up to 25% if an employer unreasonably fails to follow it, and reduce it if the employee does (TULRCA 1992, s207A). It takes the size and resources of the employer into account (para 3).
- Do not penalise the employee for raising it. A grievance alleging discrimination or harassment is usually a protected act, and treating the employee worse because of it is victimisation (Equality Act 2010, s27). A grievance can also be a protected disclosure, including one about sexual harassment since 6 April 2026 (ERA 1996, s43B(1)(da)).
- Sexual harassment complaints: employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees (Equality Act 2010, s40A). How you handle a complaint is part of that.
- Time limits keep running. Raising a grievance does not stop the time limit for a tribunal claim. For most discrimination complaints about acts on or after 1 October 2026, the normal deadline is six months less one day (Equality Act 2010, s123); earlier matters may remain subject to the old three month limit (SI 2026/954, reg 4). Conduct extending over a period, and Acas early conciliation, can affect the date. Employees normally need to notify Acas before presenting a claim. Take advice promptly rather than waiting for the grievance or appeal to finish.
- Overlap with discipline: if a grievance is raised during a disciplinary process, you may pause the disciplinary to deal with it, or deal with both together if they are related (para 46). Collective grievances raised by a representative follow your collective process, not the Code (para 47).
- Between the letters: if the grievance is about the owner or the usual decision-maker, appoint someone impartial and sufficiently independent of the issues to investigate or hear it. Consider support or proportionate interim arrangements without prejudging the complaint. Preserve relevant evidence, plan the investigation, and update the employee if it takes longer than expected. Put significant disputed information to the people concerned before reaching conclusions. Afterwards, check that the agreed actions happened and that nobody has suffered retaliation.
- Records: keep notes of meetings and the reasons for decisions. They may be disclosed in a data subject access request or a claim, so keep them factual. You cannot promise witnesses complete confidentiality.

Timeline

The Code sets no fixed number of days: it requires each step without unreasonable delay. The timings below are suggested targets for a small employer; your own procedure may set different ones.

When	What
Day 1	Grievance received in writing. Note the date. Decide who will hear it: not the subject of the grievance.
Within 5 working days (suggested)	Letter 1: acknowledge and invite to a grievance meeting. Offer informal resolution or mediation if suitable.
Within 10 working days (suggested)	Grievance meeting held, with a companion if requested. Adjourn to investigate if needed.
During the adjournment (suggested)	Letters 2 and 3: speak to witnesses and to anyone named. Keep notes.
Within 5 working days of finishing (suggested)	Letter 4: written outcome, actions and the right to appeal.
Appeal window, for example 5 to 10 working days from the outcome (suggested)	The employee submits any appeal in writing, giving the grounds.
Within 5 working days of receiving an appeal (suggested)	Letter 5: invite to an appeal meeting with a different manager where possible.
Within 5 working days of the appeal meeting (suggested)	Letter 6: written appeal outcome. This is the end of the internal process.

If something takes longer, for example because a witness is away, tell the employee and give a new date.

Grievance log

Keep this with the grievance. Distinguish allegations, evidence, findings and reasons; avoid speculation or irrelevant personal comments. Store it securely, separate from the employee's general file.

Item	Notes
Employee, role and manager	
Date grievance received, and how	
Summary of the grievance and the outcome the employee wants	
Who is hearing it (not the subject of the grievance)	
Informal resolution or mediation offered (date, outcome)	
Possible discrimination, harassment or protected disclosure? Advice taken?	
Interim support or arrangements, and next update due	
Meeting date, attendees and companion	
Witnesses and people named, and dates spoken to	
Evidence gathered	
Outcome (upheld / partly upheld / not upheld), date and reasons	
Actions agreed, owner and deadline	
Appeal received, heard by, outcome and date	
Follow-up check: actions done, and no retaliation	

Letter 1: acknowledgement and invitation to a grievance meeting

Use when you receive a formal grievance. The person hearing it should not be the subject of it.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for your letter dated [date], which I received on [date], raising a grievance about [brief neutral summary].

[If suitable:] If you would like to try to resolve this informally first, for example through a facilitated conversation or mediation, please let me know. You do not have to, and it will not affect your right to continue with the formal grievance.

I would like to meet you to discuss your grievance. The meeting will be on [date] at [time] at [place / video link], with [name, job title], who will hear the grievance. [Name] will be taking notes.

At the meeting you will be able to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved. Please bring any documents you would like us to consider, and tell me beforehand if there are people you think we should speak to.

You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative. Please tell me who, if you would like to. If your chosen companion cannot attend, please propose a reasonable alternative time within five working days after the original meeting date, and we will postpone the meeting to that time.

Please tell us if you need any adjustments to take part in the meeting.

We will deal with your grievance in confidence as far as possible. We may need to share details with people we speak to as part of the investigation.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 2: invitation to a witness

Use to ask a colleague for information. Share only what they need to know. Check your policy, and any adjustment or support needs the witness has. A witness meeting is not a disciplinary or grievance hearing, so there is no statutory right to be accompanied, but you can allow it.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

We are looking into a concern raised by a colleague, and I would like to ask you about [the event, date or subject, without unnecessary detail].

Could we meet on [date] at [time] at [place / video link]? [Name] will take notes, and I will ask you to check and sign them afterwards.

Please do not discuss this with colleagues while the matter is being looked into. This does not stop you seeking advice from a trade union representative or other adviser, or raising any concern with [name]. We will keep what you tell us as confidential as we can, but we cannot promise complete confidentiality: your account may need to be shared with the people involved, and could be disclosed if there is a claim.

You will not be treated less favourably for giving information honestly. If you have any concerns about this, please tell me.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 3: to a colleague named in a grievance

Use when the grievance is about a colleague's conduct. Keep it neutral and give enough detail for a meaningful response. Check your policy on companions at this meeting, and any support or adjustments the colleague needs. If the allegations could amount to misconduct, any disciplinary action must follow your disciplinary procedure separately.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

I am writing to let you know that a colleague has raised a grievance which refers to [you / your conduct], concerning [brief neutral summary].

No findings have been made. We are looking into the grievance, and we want to hear your account before any conclusions are reached. Could we meet on [date] at [time] at [place / video link]? [Name] will take notes.

[If allowed under your procedure:] You may bring a work colleague or trade union representative to this meeting.

Please do not discuss the grievance with the colleague who raised it or with others involved, do not approach people to influence their evidence, and do not do anything that could be seen as retaliation. This does not prevent you seeking confidential advice from a trade union representative or other adviser, making a protected disclosure, reporting a concern to an appropriate authority, or asking for support or an adjustment. If you have concerns about these arrangements, or need support, please speak to me or [name]. [If available: You can also contact our employee assistance programme on [details].]

If, after the investigation, there is a case to answer about your conduct, that would be dealt with separately under our disciplinary procedure, and you would be told in writing.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 4: grievance outcome

Use after the meeting and any investigation. Deal with each point raised: choose upheld, partly upheld or not upheld, and give reasons, distinguishing what the evidence establishes from what could not be established. Explain what will be done to address the grievance. Do not routinely disclose another person's disciplinary sanction or unnecessary personal information; where a separate disciplinary process is needed, say it will be handled separately, without prejudging its outcome.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to discuss your grievance dated [date]. [Name of companion, if any] also attended.

You raised the following points: [list each point]. You said you would like [the outcome the employee wanted].

Since the meeting, I have [describe the investigation: people spoken to, documents reviewed].

My findings and decision on each point are:

- [Point 1]: [upheld / partly upheld / not upheld], because [reasons, linked to the evidence]
- [Point 2]: [upheld / partly upheld / not upheld], because [reasons]

To resolve your grievance, we will take the following action: [actions, owners and dates]. [Where relevant: Where the findings mean that a separate process is needed, that will be handled separately, and its outcome has not been decided.] We will explain the findings and the steps relevant to resolving your grievance, while respecting other people's confidentiality. We will not normally disclose another employee's disciplinary sanction or unnecessary personal information. We will check with you on [date] that this has been done.

If you are not satisfied with this outcome, you can appeal. Please write to [name] by [date], setting out your grounds of appeal. The appeal will be heard by [name / a manager not previously involved, where possible].

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 5: invitation to a grievance appeal meeting

Use when the employee appeals. The appeal should be heard impartially and, wherever possible, by a manager not previously involved.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for your appeal dated [date] against the outcome of your grievance, which was sent to you on [date].

Your grounds of appeal are: [summarise each ground].

The appeal meeting will be on [date] at [time] at [place / video link], with [name, job title], who will consider your appeal impartially. [Where accurate: They have not previously been involved in your grievance.] [Name] will take notes.

You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative. Please tell me who, if you would like to. If your chosen companion cannot attend, please propose a reasonable alternative time within five working days after the original meeting date, and we will postpone the meeting to that time.

Please tell us if you need any adjustments to take part in the meeting, and send any further documents you want considered by [date].

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 6: grievance appeal outcome

Use after the appeal meeting. Deal with each ground of appeal, and update any actions and deadlines. This ends the internal process; it does not affect the employee's external rights.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for attending the appeal meeting on [date]. [Name of companion, if any] also attended.

You appealed on the following grounds: [list each ground]. I have considered them, together with [the original grievance, the investigation, and any new information].

My decision on each ground is:

- [Ground 1]: [upheld / partly upheld / not upheld], because [reasons]
- [Ground 2]: [upheld / partly upheld / not upheld], because [reasons]

[If any ground succeeds:] As a result, [explain what changes and what remains unchanged, with any further action, owners and dates]. We will check with you on [date] that this has been done.

[If no ground succeeds:] The original outcome of your grievance therefore stands.

This concludes our internal grievance procedure. If you have any further concerns in future, please raise them with [name].

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Need help with a grievance?

Electra HR can review a draft outcome letter before it goes out, as a fixed-price written answer, or support you through the meetings and any appeal. If a grievance needs an independent investigation, we can do that too. We advise employers and employees. electra-hr.com/contact

Our Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work policies, at electra-hr.com/hr-templates, give you a written procedure that follows the Acas Code.

Sources: Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures (acas.org.uk); Employment Relations Act 1999, ss10 and 13; TULRCA 1992, s207A; Equality Act 2010, ss27, 40A and 123; Employment Rights Act 1996, s43B (legislation.gov.uk).