

Employment Rights at Work – 10 Top Tips

1. If you start a new permanent job your employer will have a statutory duty to issue you with a written statement setting out the main terms and conditions of your employment together with a disciplinary procedure and with a grievance procedure within 8 weeks of your starting work. Ensure that you obtain copies of these documents and spent time familiarising yourself with their terms and with all of your employer's policies and procedures which affect you.
2. If you have a grievance about a colleague, a manager, the manner in which you have been treated or any other unfairness within your employment and want to complain about it, put your complaint in writing. Give a copy of it to the person responsible for dealing with grievances, give a copy to the Human Resources Manager and keep a copy for yourself.
3. Once you have lodged your grievance ensure that it is dealt with in accordance with your employer's grievance procedure, within a reasonable time and on a fair basis. If the grievance is not upheld you have the right of appeal but once the appeal has been concluded the internal procedures are exhausted and you will then either have to accept the decision or, if that is not possible, leave.
4. If you have a complaint made against you which could lead to disciplinary action refresh your memory as to the terms of your employer's disciplinary procedure and once you have details of the complaint take the time to write down a detailed history of all events leading up to it. This needs to be done while your memory of what happened is at its sharpest and has not had time to fade.
5. If any of your colleagues witnessed what happened and you believe they will give an honest account of it, pass their details on to your employer so that your colleagues can be interviewed as part of the investigation.
6. If there are documents which support your position ensure that you obtain the originals or copies of them. If you obtain originals retain them and produce copies to your employer.
7. If the complaint is serious and places your future employment at risk take independent professional advice at the earliest opportunity and certainly before you attend any disciplinary meeting.
8. If the complaint against you is upheld exercise your right of appeal by giving written notice of appeal as soon as possible.
9. If your appeal fails, if you are dismissed and if you are considering making a claim for compensation for unfair dismissal it is imperative that you take independent professional advice as soon as possible because if you want to pursue a claim it has to be lodged with an employment tribunal within 3 months from the effective date of the termination of your employment. If you delay beyond that date the primary limitation period will have expired and your claim may be time barred.
10. The effective date of your dismissal is the date when you were first dismissed not the date on which any appeal failed.