

Small Business Employee Handbook

This template is a general starting point for information only — it is not legal advice. Employment, wage, leave, and at-will rules vary by country, state, and city and change over time. Have a qualified employment attorney review and tailor this handbook before you distribute it, and delete any policy that does not apply to your organization.

1. Welcome

Welcome to {{Company Name}}. We are a small team, so this short handbook covers the basics — how we work together, what we expect, and what you can expect from us. {{Add a line or two about what your business does and what matters most to you.}} It is not a contract and cannot cover everything; when you are unsure about anything, just ask {{the owner / your manager}}. We would always rather you ask than guess.

Open with a short, genuine welcome and one or two lines on your mission and values. This sets the tone before the policies begin.

2. Employment Basics

- Equal opportunity: {{Company Name}} is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of any characteristic protected by applicable law.
- Employment relationship: {{Describe your employment relationship — e.g., employment is at-will where permitted by law, meaning either party may end it at any time, with or without cause}}.
- Employee classifications: {{Define full-time, part-time, temporary, and exempt vs non-exempt as you use them}}.
- Probationary / introductory period: {{Length and what it means, if you use one}}.

At-will employment is not valid everywhere — outside the US, and in some agreements, different rules apply. Confirm the correct wording for every location you employ people with your attorney.

3. Code of Conduct

- Treat customers and each other with respect. We do not allow harassment, bullying, or discrimination of any kind, including conduct based on any characteristic protected by the law where we operate.
- If something is wrong — you feel harassed, you see a safety problem, or you have a worry about how we do things — tell {{the owner or your manager}} right away. We will take it seriously and {{will not punish anyone for raising a concern in good faith}}.
- Show up when you are scheduled, and let {{the owner / your manager}} know as early as you can — at least {{e.g., two hours before your shift}} — if you will be late or cannot come in.

- Keep honest records: report your hours accurately and {{handle cash, the register, and inventory honestly}}.
- Tell {{the owner}} about any other job or side business that could be a conflict, so we can sort out anything that overlaps.
- Do not come to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs. {{State your rule on this and on phone use during work, in plain words.}}
- {{Describe what to wear — for example, a clean company shirt, closed-toe shoes, and a name badge.}}

Cover professional behaviour, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination, attendance, dress, and conflicts of interest. Say how to report a concern and state a clear no-retaliation commitment.

4. Working Hours, Pay & Timekeeping

- We post the schedule {{where and how far ahead — e.g., on the staff board by Thursday for the following week}}. If you need a shift change, {{ask the owner / swap only with approval}}.
- We pay {{weekly / every two weeks}} by {{check / direct deposit}} on {{payday}}. Your pay covers {{the period that ends a few days before payday}}.
- We pay you for every hour you work. If you are eligible for overtime under {{the law where we operate}}, you earn it for hours over {{the legal threshold}} — but please get {{the owner's}} okay before working extra hours.
- Clock in and out honestly using {{how you track time}}, including for unpaid breaks. Never clock in for someone else.
- You get the breaks {{required by law and by us where you work}}. {{Say how long they are and whether they are paid.}}
- If your paycheck looks wrong, tell {{the owner}} that week and we will fix it.

State the standard schedule, pay periods, how overtime is handled for non-exempt staff, and how time is recorded. Wage-and-hour rules are heavily regulated — match them to your jurisdiction.

5. Time Off & Leave

- Time off: {{say how much paid time off staff get, if any, how it builds up, and how to ask for it — small businesses differ a lot here, so be clear}}.
- Holidays: {{list the days you close or pay holiday pay, and how that works for anyone who works the day}}.
- Sick days: {{describe paid or unpaid sick time and how to call in; some states and cities require paid sick leave — follow the rule where you operate}}.
- Bigger or legally required leave — like family, medical, jury duty, or military leave — {{describe what applies to you; many laws only cover larger employers, so confirm what applies to a business your size}}.
- To ask for time off, {{tell the owner / put it on the schedule}} as far ahead as you can. For a sick

day, **call or text the owner** before your shift.

List paid time off, holidays, sick leave, and any legally required leave (such as family, medical, or jury duty). Required leave varies widely by location — verify each entitlement before you publish.

6. Benefits Overview

This section summarizes the benefits **Company Name** offers, including **health insurance, retirement plan, and any others**. Official plan documents govern in all cases; where this summary and a plan document differ, the plan document controls. **Describe eligibility and enrolment.**

Keep benefits descriptions short and point to the official plan documents for detail. Never let the handbook contradict an insurance or retirement plan document.

7. Workplace Health & Safety

- If you get hurt at work, even a little, tell **the owner / your manager** the same day so we can help and write it down.
- If you see something unsafe — a spill, a broken step, faulty equipment — fix it if you safely can and tell **the owner**. You will never be in trouble for speaking up about safety.
- Know where the **exits, fire extinguisher, and first-aid kit** are, and what to do in an emergency.
- Follow the simple safety rules for our work: **e.g., lift with your legs, clean up spills right away, wear gloves for cleaning, use the ladder properly**. **Reference any safety rules that apply to your business — for example, OSHA in the US.**
- Never handle **electrical, equipment, or chemical** problems you have not been trained for — call **the owner / a professional**.

Cover how to report injuries and hazards, emergency procedures, and any safety rules specific to your workplace. Reference the safety regulations that apply to your industry by name.

8. Technology & Acceptable Use

- Anything we provide — the **point-of-sale system, work phone, email, or computer** — is for work. **Say whether a little personal use is okay.**
- Keep logins private: do not share passwords, and lock or sign out of **the register / computer** when you step away.
- Protect customer information — names, payment details, anything personal. Do not share it, post it, or take it home, and follow **any privacy rules that apply to us**.
- Do not post about work problems, customers, or co-workers on social media, and never share anything confidential.
- **Say whether the cameras, register, or computer are monitored, in plain language.**
- Tell **the owner** right away if a device is lost or stolen, or if you think an account was hacked.

Set expectations for company devices, accounts, email, and data. Be clear about what is monitored and what is private, and reference your data-protection obligations.

9. Confidentiality & Company Property

Employees are expected to protect {{Company Name}} confidential information, customer data, and intellectual property during and after employment, and to return all company property on departure. {{Reference your confidentiality or IP agreement where one applies.}}

Tie this to any separate confidentiality, IP-assignment, or data-protection agreement employees sign, rather than restating it all here.

10. Discipline & Leaving the Company

This section describes how {{Company Name}} addresses performance and conduct issues and what happens when employment ends — including notice expectations, final pay handled per applicable law, return of property, and any exit steps. {{Describe your progressive-discipline approach, if you use one, and keep it consistent with the at-will language above.}}

If you describe a progressive-discipline process, add that the company may depart from it at its discretion — otherwise it can be read as a promise that undercuts at-will employment.

11. Acknowledgement of Receipt

I acknowledge that I have received and read the {{Company Name}} Employee Handbook. I understand it summarizes current policies and is not a contract of employment, that employment is {{at-will, where permitted by law}}, and that {{Company Name}} may update these policies at any time. I agree to follow the policies it describes.

Employee Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____	Date Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
--	--

Have every employee sign and date this page, and keep the signed copy on file. It is your record that the handbook was received and understood.