

# Guide to Writing a Warning Memo



## Steps to Take:

### **Step 1**

*Provide historical background.*

- "Verbal warning was given," etc. (e.g., state what happened despite the warning, describe how often and when, discuss continuing impact on personal/unit productivity).
- Be specific about any coaching or management support given during the Verbal Warning period (e.g., Classroom training, on-the-job training, positive or instructive coaching sessions).

### **Step 2**

*Explain specific expectations for performance in the future.*

- State that "there must be immediate and sustained improvement on the issue," and that "failure to improve may lead to immediate termination."

### **Step 3**

*Advertise the Employee Assistance Program.*

- "If problems outside work are contributing to these performance issues, you should feel free to contact our Employee Assistance Program, at [give number]. This is a confidential and free service available to all employees."

### **Step 4**

*Give the employee a chance to give their opinions.*

- "If you disagree with this memo or would like to discuss it further, you should contact [manager's manager, or Human Resources]."

### **Step 5**

*Reiterate your willingness to support the employee's improvement efforts.*

- "I am available to discuss with you any factors that may be affecting your performance" However, make sure that you do not compromise your expectations.

### **Step 6**

*Obtain the employee's signature and date.*

- The employee may add comments if they wish. If they refuse to sign, write "refused to sign", date it, and make copies for your manager, the employee, and the employee's personnel file.

## Example

### Memorandum to Employee File

To: [Employee]  
From: [Manager]  
Subject: Written Warning - [Performance Issue]  
Date: [Date]

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#### *Mention previous performance discussions, cite continued problems*

On [date], you were placed on Verbal Warning due to [problem, e.g. *absenteeism*]. At that time, you were clearly told of my expectations for your performance and your need to improve. Despite that warning, you [event 1, 2, 3, e.g. *were again absent on July 9 and August 12*]. We previously discussed the negative effects that [problem, e.g. *absenteeism*] has on department productivity.

#### *Describe consequences*

As a result of [event/issue], you are now being placed on Written Warning. You will be expected to maintain standards [re-state standards/expectations], and should be aware that failure to demonstrate immediate and sustained improvement could result in further corrective action or termination.

#### *Offer support*

In our prior discussion, we identified ways to meet [standards, e.g. *attendance guidelines*], and I am willing to assist you further. Please let me know if there are any obstacles preventing you from [required performance, e.g. *getting to work on time*]. If problems outside of work are contributing to these performance issues, you should feel free to contact our Employee Assistance Program. This is a free and confidential service available to all employees.

#### *Offer 3rd party involvement, obtain signature*

If you would like to discuss this memo with Human Resources, please contact [HR]. Please sign below to indicate that you have received this memo and understand the company's expectations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

cc: [personnel file]