

INVESTIGATION REPORT WRITING BEST PRACTICES

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A well-written investigation report is the only way to prove that an investigation was carried out thoroughly. It's a tool for avoiding litigation and keeping a company's reputation intact. Thorough investigation reports show that a company takes employee complaints seriously and responds to them appropriately.

This guide covers the basics of writing investigation reports that are formatted properly, easy to understand and error-free.

An effective investigation report:

- Is easy to read and follow
- Is detailed enough so that someone unfamiliar with the case can understand what was done
- Documents the findings and facts of an investigation
- Demonstrates that all allegations were addressed
- Includes recommendations and a follow-up of corrective action taken
- Is clearly written, without grammatical, spelling and factual errors

Introduction

- How and when the incident occurred
- Date that the complaint was made/brought to the employer
- Date that the investigation started
- Names and information for those who conducted the investigation
- A summary of the investigation process used
- A summary of the allegations investigated

Documentation of Interviews

- List of the people interviewed, their titles and contact information
- The location of each interview
- List of anyone who refused to be interviewed or couldn't be interviewed and why
- List of any follow-up interviews that occurred and the interview details

Evidence

- Complete list of the evidence collected and reviewed

Allegations and Findings

- Allegations investigated and responses
- Facts of the event(s) that occurred
- Factual discrepancies uncovered
- Reasons why or why not someone's statements are considered to be truthful

Conclusions

- Whether or not a company policy was violated and which one
- Issues that couldn't be resolved and why

Recommendations

- Recommendations to remedy the situation
- Corrective action taken (may have to be added to the report after it has been submitted)

Formatting Tips

- Follow your company's style guide.
- If your company's style guide doesn't specify the font, use either Arial 10 or 11 for everything, or Arial for Headings and Times New Roman for text. Keep it simple.
- Set margins at one inch (2.5 cms) or more. Align left.
- Set paragraph spacing to 12pt/3pt, for body copy and 6pt/3pt for bulleted lists.
- Use italics, not bold, for emphasis.
- TITLES and PRIMARY HEADINGS can be in CAPITALS, BOLD, UNDERLINED or a combination, but must be consistent. Sub-headings should be underlined only. Don't bold or underline the period.