

What Do You Need in an Employee Handbook?

Employee handbooks serve as your [corporate instruction manual](#), helping employees more readily do their jobs by providing protocols and procedures that explain routine operations for the company. A good employee handbook needs to be customized to meet your specific business needs ([one of our specialties](#)), but there are common elements that all employee handbooks should include, including legal disclosures, operating instructions, dress code, benefits information, and much more. Here are some basics offered by the [Small Business Administration](#) that should be part of any employee handbook to help you create an employee handbook that is compliant with the law, and protects your operation:

Anti-discrimination Policies: All employers are required to comply with equal employment opportunity ([EEOC](#)) laws. The employee handbook should outline the expectations for compliance and how employees should conduct themselves. Include guidelines to prevent harassment as well as discrimination.

NDA and Conflict of Interest: Protecting company secrets and intellectual property is important for any business. Include a [non-disclosure agreement](#) and [conflict of interest](#) statements in the employee handbook to protect your business and to serve as clear guidelines as well as a reminder of the rules of confidentiality.

Standards of Conduct: These include dress codes, code of ethics, and other expectations about how employees should conduct themselves in the workplace. Also be sure to outline standards of compliance as they relate to any regulatory restrictions, such as protecting patient information in a medical office in compliance with [HIPAA](#).

Compensation: Employees should be given a clear indication of where their paycheck goes, and how much is deducted for benefits, federal taxes, and state taxes. It also should provide guidelines related to pay schedules, overtime, work scheduling, vacation scheduling, breaks, and bonuses.

General Employee Information: An overview of the business including your mission statement, general employment policies such as work eligibility, job classifications, employee referrals, job postings, hiring probation periods, termination and resignation procedures, etc.

Work Hours: As part of the employee handbook, include hours of operation, rules for attendance and punctuality, procedures for reporting in sick or absent, as well as information about flexible schedules and telecommuting options, if they are available.

Safety and Security Procedures: Include information about security procedures and safety protocols, especially policies relating to [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) laws that require employees to report safety hazards and injuries.

Using Business Tools – Computers: The employee handbook is the best place to outline procedures about the appropriate use, and the misuse, of company assets and tools, especially computers. Computers in the workplace have created new concerns about data security, unauthorized software downloads, inappropriate content, and employers collecting personal information about employees. Outline what the rules and regulations are with regard to use of computers and other company assets, and the consequences for misuse.

These are just a few of the points to cover in a well-developed employee handbook. There are many others and it will be difficult for any manager to cover all contingencies and eventualities. That is why the employee handbook should be an evolving document that is updated regularly. It is a good idea to consult with an HR professional to make certain you cover all the necessary points.