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# Business Letters & Emails

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- ✓ Guidance notes included
- ✓ Saves time

This is an excerpt from Lawpack's book *Business Letters & Emails Made Easy*.  
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business situation, [click here](#).

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For convenience (and for no other reason) 'him', 'he' and 'his' have been used throughout and should be read to include 'her', 'she' and 'her'.

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# Index of templates by type

This index is designed to be used with the Contents and the main Index at the end of the book. The Contents gives a good overview of the templates concerned with suppliers, customers, employees and so on. But if you have to write a complaining letter or email (and want to compare these kinds of templates), it is difficult to find them easily by examining the Contents. However, if you look up *Complaining* in this index, you will find a list of the templates featured that are concerned with this topic and their page number.

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## CHAPTER 5

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# Employing people

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- ✓ Resignations
- ✓ Warnings and dismissal
- ✓ General announcements and notices
- ✓ Notices to individual employees
- ✓ Maternity and other leave
- ✓ Motivating staff
- ✓ Offering congratulations
- ✓ Health and safety
- ✓ Holiday policy
- ✓ Offering sincere condolences

A scan of the templates contained in this chapter shows the diversity of employee-related subjects that demand correspondence. Some of them are fairly straightforward, such as asking a candidate to attend an interview. Others, such as warnings and dismissal, and maternity templates, require more consideration to make sure the correct legal regulations are being adhered to satisfactorily. All of them need to be carefully drafted if they are not to be misinterpreted by the recipient. Some of the highlights are examined here.

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## References

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Giving references can be awkward, because of the need to give a fair and honest reply which does not conceal relevant information. A failure to do this could expose you to a claim from either the prospective employer or the employee. Templates 145 and 146 show how to give a qualified reference.

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## Giving warnings

---

Templates 148–150 cover the tricky issue of giving appropriate warnings to an employee about his conduct, from first written warning through to dismissal.

---

## Dismissal

---

Great care needs to be taken before dismissing someone without giving them a warning. Template 151 shows how to handle it for a case of gross misconduct. Remember, this letter may be used in evidence against you in an industrial tribunal.

---

## Congratulations

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Offering appropriate congratulations can sometimes be as awkward as writing a letter of condolence. Templates 165–167 show how you can write a sincere and well-phrased letter.

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## Condolences

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For many people, a letter of condolence is one of the most difficult ones to write. But, at some time or other, most managers will have to face writing one. Templates 172–173 show how it can be done.

## INTERVIEWS AND OFFERS

### 143: Making an offer of employment

Offers of employment may vary from those that are highly detailed contracts, to those that contain the minimum of legally required information. A letter that contains all the details of a contract could appear intimidating to some employees and may even deter some candidates at the last minute. This letter allows the writer to adopt a friendlier but no-less-professional approach.

The points that need to be stated in a contract are: the position, the date of joining, the name of your employer, the salary, how frequently the salary is paid, when it will be reviewed, the normal hours of work, amount of holiday, rights to sick pay, pension arrangements, the period of notice that is required on either side and to whom the post reports.

You will want the employee to confirm his appointment in writing with you. Note how a duplicate copy is enclosed for the employee to sign and return, saving him the trouble of having to sit down and compose a letter.

Dear John,

Following our conversation this morning, I am delighted to confirm our offer of the job of Office Manager, with effect from Monday 25 February 2012.

I confirm that your annual salary will be £23,000, which will be paid monthly in arrears. Your salary will be reviewed after six months, in August. Thereafter, it will normally be reviewed annually in April.

The post reports to John Hibbert, our Managing Director. Our normal terms of employment will apply, as outlined on the attached sheet. We do operate a sick-pay scheme and although we do not have a company pension scheme, we give every help to anyone wishing to set up a personal scheme.

Your normal hours each week will be 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, with an hour's break for lunch.

You will be entitled to 24 days' holiday per year in addition to statutory holidays and the three days between Christmas and New Year. One month's notice is required on either side, and the first three months are viewed as a mutual trial period.

Your employer, for contractual purposes, is H J Kingsley (Norwich) Ltd. Please sign the attached copy in acceptance of this offer.

Yours sincerely,

P J Cross  
Personnel Manager

I accept the above offer of employment as set out in the above letter.

Signed ..... Date .....

## REFERENCES

### 144: Asking for a reference

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When employing new staff, it is prudent to ask for a reference from their previous employer. This not only helps to verify that the candidate has worked where he says he did, but it also gives you an opportunity to find out more about him.

The questions asked here should enable you to find out how well he worked for and was judged by his previous employer.

Asking for two references from different people means you have a chance to spot any inconsistent replies, which could signal a need for further questions or enquiries.

Dear Mr Holmes,

We have received an application from John Hibbert for the position of Office Manager.

I would be grateful if you could answer the questions below concerning John Hibbert's employment with you.

1. What date did he join and leave your company?
2. What job(s) did he perform at your company?
3. How would you rate his timekeeping?
4. How much time in a year did he take off for sickness?
5. How many people was he supervising in his job with you?
6. Has any disciplinary action had to be taken against him, however minor?
7. Would you say he is a conscientious worker?
8. How would you rate his experience to perform the job for which he has applied?
9. Are there any reasons that you are aware of why we should not employ him?
10. What was his reason for leaving your company?

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Milnes  
Personnel Manager

## REFERENCES

### 145: Replying to a request for a reference

If you are asked to give a reference, it must be given honestly and fairly.

When giving a reference, you are in a position of privilege that entitles you to say exactly what you think about a person, even if it might, in other circumstances, be defamatory. However, you must not say anything about the person maliciously, otherwise the position of privilege may be lost and you could face a claim from the employee.

Similarly, a failure to answer a question truthfully may expose you to a claim from the employer. This sense of having to walk a fine line often leads to referees giving fairly anodyne, non-judgemental references. It would, therefore, be a mistake to treat the answers to a reference as telling all there is to know about an employee. Nevertheless, it does give a worthwhile snapshot view and acts as a useful check.

Dear Ms Milnes,

Thank you for your request for a reference for John Hibbert.

I can confirm that John held the position of Office Assistant with us from June 2006 to April 2008. In April, he was appointed Office Manager and he stayed with us until December of the same year.

John's timekeeping was excellent and, although he had the occasional day off sick in a year, the amount was no more than one would expect. Most of the occasions were caused by seasonal bouts of 'flu.

In his post of Office Assistant, no one reported to John. However, in his role of Office Manager, he was responsible for managing a team of six personal assistants.

No disciplinary action has ever been taken against John and he is a very conscientious worker.

I am not aware of all the responsibilities that you are expecting him to perform, but, provided that they are broadly similar to those areas in which he has experience, I would say that he was well qualified to perform those tasks.

John told us he wished to leave because he was keen to work in a larger organisation, where there were greater opportunities for advancement and to learn more skills than we were realistically able to offer him.

I hope this gives you all the information you require, but if you do have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Holmes  
Personnel Manager

## REFERENCES

**146: Giving a qualified reference**

If there has been an incident (a disciplinary offence, for example) that is asked about, you should not ignore it in a reference. Note how the letter seeks to put the offence into its true context – it was a one-off and his performance apart from that one time has been exemplary.

Don't be afraid to state exactly how you interpret a particular question. Here, the former employer is unaware of all the responsibilities expected of the candidate in his new job, so note how the question is thrown back with the phrase '...provided appropriate training is made available to him...'; which cleverly leaves the new employer with the responsibility for making the judgement.

Dear Ms Milnes,

Thank you for your letter requesting a reference for John Hibbert.

I can confirm that John held the position of Office Assistant with us for just over three years, from June 2005 to Jan 2012.

John's timekeeping was excellent and although he had the occasional day off sick in a year, the amount was no more than one would expect. Most of the occasions were caused by seasonal bouts of 'flu.

Although John is a conscientious worker, he was disciplined on one occasion for taking an additional day's holiday over and above his normal entitlement.

This incident was very much an exception and I have never had cause to complain about any other matter.

I am not aware of all the responsibilities that you are expecting him to perform, but, provided appropriate training is made available to him, I would say that John is now ready to build upon his current experience and take on more responsibility in his new appointment.

He has a very affable personality and the ability to work well in a team environment, especially where it is essential to get on with a number of different types of people. I have every confidence he will make a valuable contribution to your business and am therefore pleased to be able to support his application.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Holmes  
Personnel Manager

**RESIGNATIONS****147: Resigning from a job**

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A letter of resignation should be succinct and to the point. It is useful to specify the date that you intend to leave on to avoid any misunderstanding later.

The second paragraph is not obligatory but helps set a friendly tone for the departure. It is always worth leaving on good terms. You never know when you may come into contact with the people for whom you work again, perhaps in other companies that you move to in the future.

Dear Mr Moore,

It is with regret that I tender my resignation as Assistant Export Manager.

This follows my appointment as Export Manager with Abeltech. As I am required under my contract to give one month's notice, I understand my last day of employment will be 20 June 2012.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for all the invaluable help, advice and encouragement that you have given me during my three years with G B Grey. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, but I feel the moment is now right for me to take up new responsibilities and challenges.

Yours sincerely,

Peter King

## WARNINGS AND DISMISSAL

### 148: First written warning to an employee (for breaching the safety code)

This letter has a formal air to it. It is designed to confirm what has already been discussed at a previous meeting. It is also written to prevent any disagreement at a later stage about what action has or has not been taken.

It demonstrates that the company has done all it can to explain the importance of adhering to the safety regulations, should this be necessary at a future health and safety or employment tribunal.

An interesting point to note is the way the letter seeks to win the employee back on to the side of the company by explaining that the code is not operated '...for the benefit of the company but for the benefit of all our employees, and '...one employee's breach of the code may endanger another employee's life...'

**Note:** Any disciplinary action must be carried out in accordance with the Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

Dear Mr Turner

#### Re: YOUR BREACH OF THE COMPANY'S SAFETY CODE

I confirm the points we discussed at our meeting on 12 July, concerning your negligence in adhering to the strict safety code we operate. The complaint was that on 12 July you did not wear a hard safety hat in the construction zone of the factory for a period of one hour, despite the fact that your manager had reprimanded you for not doing so a week earlier.

As we agreed, you must at all times adhere to the safety code of the company. I am reissuing a copy of the code to you and am asking your manager to go through it with you again, so you are quite clear about what is expected of you. If you are unclear about anything, however trivial it may seem, do not hesitate to ask. The safety code of the company is not operated for the benefit of the company but for the benefit of all our employees. You must understand that one employee's breach of the code may endanger another employee's life and it is for this reason that we enforce the policy strictly.

This is your first warning of a company rules violation. Future violations may lead to further disciplinary action being taken. You may appeal against this decision and if you wish to exercise this right, please notify me within seven working days.

Finally, please sign the enclosed copy of this letter to confirm that you have received this letter and another copy of the safety code and return the letter to me for my files.

Yours sincerely,

John Cooper  
Director of Personnel

## WARNINGS AND DISMISSAL

### 149: Final written warning to an employee (for breaching the safety code)

The final letter is much colder in its approach. It makes it clear to the employee what the consequences will be of failing to adhere to the safety standard. There is no attempt to persuade the employee to co-operate for his own and others' sake.

Note how the letter refers to specific dates, confirming the history in case the matter should come to a tribunal.

**Note:** Any disciplinary action must be carried out in accordance with the Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

Dear Mr Turner

#### **Re: YOUR BREACH OF THE COMPANY'S SAFETY CODE**

On 12 July, you breached the safety code by failing to wear a hard hat. On 15 September you were again discovered to have breached the code by not wearing the hard hat provided for you to use in the construction area of the factory.

It was made clear to you at the meeting on 12 July and in the letter to you of the same day that we expected you to follow the safety code strictly at all times. You have failed to do this.

For your own safety and for the safety of the others you must follow strictly all aspects of the safety code, especially wearing a hard hat in the zones required.

Due to this continued breach of the company's safety rules this letter is confirmation that you have been issued with a final written warning.

There has not been a satisfactory improvement in your conduct since your last warnings. Accordingly, any continued violations of company policy or failure to conduct yourself according to the rules of the company shall result in further disciplinary action being taken, which may result in you being dismissed.

We remind you that you have the right of appeal against this warning according to the Terms and Conditions of Employment as supplied to you and if you wish to exercise this right, please notify me in writing within seven working days.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

John Cooper  
Director of Personnel

## WARNINGS AND DISMISSAL

### 150: Dismissing an employee (for breaching the safety code)

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The letter confirming dismissal sets out the events in a clear, factual way. It highlights the dates, to reinforce that the company has carried out its duties to the letter. It makes it clear that the company has given the employee the opportunity to improve his conduct, in case this should be used as a defence at an employment tribunal.

**Note:** Any disciplinary action must be carried out in accordance with the Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

Dear Mr Turner

**Re: YOUR BREACH OF THE COMPANY'S SAFETY CODE**

I refer to our meeting on 27 October when we discussed the matter of how you were, for a third time, discovered not wearing a hard hat in the construction zone of the factory.

On 12 July and 15 September it was made clear to you that failure to wear a hard hat in a safety zone amounted to a breach of the company's safety code.

You were given a warning on 15 September that if you failed again to adhere to the company's safety code, you would be dismissed.

You have been given the opportunity to improve your conduct but have repeatedly ignored these warnings given to you. In the circumstances we have no option but to dismiss you with effect from 1 November. You will receive one month's pay in lieu of notice.

You are entitled to appeal against the company's decision to dismiss you and if you wish to exercise this right, please notify me in writing within seven days.

Yours sincerely,

John Cooper  
Director of Personnel

## WARNINGS AND DISMISSAL

### 151: Summary dismissal

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A summary dismissal can be difficult to defend at an employment tribunal and a decision to dismiss instantly should not be taken lightly. If you do decide to dismiss, you must demonstrate that you have given the employee every opportunity to explain his conduct. A failure to do this may lead to a claim for unfair dismissal.

**Note:** Any disciplinary action must be carried out in accordance with the Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

Dear Mr Black,

I refer to our meeting on 12 June.

I regret to inform you that we are terminating your employment with immediate effect. This decision is based on an incident reported to me on 10 June by your supervisor, Paul Smith, and on the explanation given at the disciplinary meeting. The report recommended your dismissal because of your repeated intoxication during working hours.

As you are aware, the first reported incident of your intoxication on the job was on 21 May. That report was placed on your personnel file, and you were informed at that time that another incident would result in a disciplinary action or possible dismissal.

This second incident of intoxication adversely affected the operational efficiency and effectiveness of your department and threatened the safety of other employees and this amounts to an act of gross misconduct.

You are entitled to appeal against the company's decision to dismiss you and if you wish to exercise this right, please notify me in writing within seven days.

Yours sincerely,

John Tome  
Personnel Director