

Termination Checklist

Discreet. Lawful. Humane.

01 BEFORE THE MEETING (THE WEEK PRIOR)

The paperwork

- The business reason is documented and consistent with prior records.
- Performance issues (if any) have been raised in writing before now.
- A legal review has happened if anything feels even slightly risky.
- Severance agreement is drafted and reviewed if applicable.
- Final paycheck is calculated to your state's deadline.

The logistics

- COBRA paperwork is ready to hand over.
- IT is quietly looped in to disable access during the meeting.
- A neutral, private space is booked.
- Tuesday or Wednesday morning. Never Friday at 4pm. Never Monday at 8am.

The people

- The manager knows their role (lead or support).
- HR knows theirs (witness, paperwork, logistics).
- Someone is available to walk the person out with dignity.

02 WHEN TERMINATIONS ARE CONCERNING

Signs to take seriously

- The person has expressed anger or made veiled threats.
- There's a history of conflict with the supervisor.
- They have access to weapons, machinery, or sensitive systems.
- They're being terminated unexpectedly, without prior performance conversations.
- They have a known history of substance abuse.
- They're going through a recent personal crisis (divorce, financial stress, loss).

If you don't have in-house security

- Two people in the room, always. Never the manager alone.
- Sit closer to the door than they do.
- Tell a trusted colleague that the meeting is happening and when.
- Have IT disable access during the meeting, not after.
- For elevated risk, hire a security professional in plain clothes to be present nearby.
- Call your local police non-emergency line if there are any threat indicators.

After a concerning termination

- Don't allow re-entry to the building without an appointment.
- Document any follow-up contact, even brief or indirect.
- Offer EAP information at the time of the meeting and in writing afterward.
- If threats continue, file a police report and consult counsel.

STATE PAY TIMING

Final paycheck rules vary by state for involuntary terminations. Some require same-day payment (California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, and others). Most allow next regular payday. Verify your state before scheduling the meeting.

03 DURING THE MEETING (15 MINUTES OR LESS)

Open with the decision, not the buildup.

OPENER

"Thank you for coming in. I have hard news. Effective today, your employment with [Company] is ending."

State the reason in one sentence. Don't justify. Don't debate.

REASON

"This is a final business decision."

Walk through the paperwork.

- Final paycheck and last day details.
- Severance offer and signing window if applicable.
- Benefits continuation through [date] and COBRA information.
- Return of company property.

Close the loop.

CLOSE

"What questions can I answer for you?"

Be ready for emotion. Don't fill silence. Don't soften the decision.

04 AFTER THE MEETING

Within the hour

- Disable system, email, and physical access.
- Help them collect personal items, or schedule pickup.
- Notify the immediate team with a short, professional message.
- Save signed documents to the personnel file.

Within 48 hours

- Process the final paycheck per state law.
- Send the formal COBRA notification.
- Update payroll, benefits, and HRIS.
- Notify external vendors or clients carefully and professionally.
- Document the meeting outcome and any follow-up needed.

Within the week

- Step back. What went well? What would you change?
- Make sure documentation is clean in case anything goes legal later.
- Take care of the team. People notice how exits are handled.

How you end someone's time at your company says more about your culture than how you started it.