

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS: 10 COMMON MISTAKES

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**PROJECT  
MANAGEMENT**

Your employee handbook can be the foundation of employee performance and a shield against lawsuits, or it can be a ticking time bomb that confuses employees and strips away your legal defenses. It depends on how well it's written and put to use.

### Here are the 10 most common handbook mistakes to avoid:

1. Adopting a "form" handbook, which includes promises you'll never keep.
2. Including lots of detail on procedures, which confuses employees. Keep a separate procedures manual.
3. Mentioning an employee probationary period. That can erase at-will status by implying that once the period is over, employees can stay indefinitely.
4. Being too specific in your discipline policy. That gives the idea that the list covers every infraction. Workers can easily claim inconsistency.

5. Not being consistent with other company documents. Make sure all policies speak in one voice.
6. Overlooking an at-will disclaimer. Have employees sign a disclaimer acknowledging that the company can terminate their employment at any time and bypass discipline policies. It is also a good practice having your employees sign an employment agreement stating that their employment is an at-will employment.
7. Sabotaging disclaimers by what you say, especially by reassuring employees their jobs are safe.

8. Not adapting the handbook to accommodate each state's laws.
9. Failing to update the manual frequently for changing laws.
10. Setting unrealistic policies. If managers won't enforce it, don't put it in the handbook.

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