

Congratulations, you have your new offer of employment in writing and have decided to accept, but what do you do now?

When it comes to saying “goodbye”, however hard it maybe, it's important not to let your emotions get the better of you.

There is a “right” and “wrong” way to resign, you never know when you and your soon to be “ex-employer” will cross paths again, so take a step back, and follow these simple steps on how best to resign from your current position, and some pertinent points that you may wish to consider during the resignation process.

Be Prepared

This is a good time to check your contract of employment and your employer's organisational handbook, for any contractual obligations or resignation procedures you may need to adhere to.

Here are a few issues you need to consider;

- Confirm how long your “notice period” is, i.e. how much notice you need to give to your employer before leaving. If no notice period is stipulated, it is courteous to give between one week and a month, depending on your length of service.
- How is your holiday entitlement and accrual affected? Make sure you also have an idea of how many days holiday you have left to take in this holiday year. If you have taken more than your allowance you may owe your employer money which could be deducted from your final pay.
- It is normal for you to work through your notice period; however there are occasions when you may be asked to cut this short, be prepared to offer suggestions on how to handover your duties and responsibilities in a shorter time period. If your employer requires you to work notice and you decide not to, you will only be paid for any hours worked. If you offer to work notice and your employer does not wish you to do so you may be paid in lieu of notice.
- Ensure that you obtain any outstanding bonuses, commission, holiday pay, time off in lieu, or any other benefits you're due. If you are unsure of what you are owed, following your resignation, your HR department should be able to get this information for you so make sure you request it as soon as possible so any discrepancies can be resolved.

Letting your Employer know

It is courtesy that as well as an official resignation letter, that you speak to your employer in person regarding your intentions to resign. It is important that you consider what you will say within your resignation letter and at your resignation meeting, so how do you approach this?

The Resignation Letter

Regardless of how you are feeling, your resignation letter should not be used to highlight grievances you may have, but rather be handled as a professional business document created to leave a positive impression of yourself.

See your resignation letter as a way to maintain a positive relationship with your employer with the ability to explain your reasons for leaving in a clear, concise and rational way. **Remember, “Don't burn your bridges”, you never know when your paths will cross in the future and you may need a reference from them.**

What do I include in my resignation letter?

Keep your resignation letter basic and concise, giving the details of the position you are resigning from and your intended leaving date following the notice period detailed in your contract. Get to the point but avoid any negative comments, this is time to think about the future with your new employer, not the past!

Make sure you keep it simple; you do not have to go into detail about your new role. Keep the wording pleasant, this certainly is not the place to be negative about your reasons for leaving.

It is good practice to write your resignation letter and then sleep on it, allowing you to read and re-write with a clear view. If you feel comfortable, ask a friend to read your resignation letter and gauge their opinions. **Remember – Think twice, act once.**

Should you include reasons for leaving in the resignation letter?

This is very much dependent on those reasons and how you want to be seen by colleagues following your departure. If you decide it is appropriate to include reasons for leaving; it is best to stick to a main reason and it is important that you keep it brief, clear and constructive. However hard it maybe, refrain from getting personal, no matter how you feel.

Say thank you

It may be difficult, but it is a good idea to say "thank you" to your soon to be ex-employer for the time you have spent there and the opportunities and experience you have been given whilst in their employ.

The Resignation Letter Template

There are many ways to construct a resignation letter, but the following gives you an idea of a standard resignation letter template that can be used.

[INSERT COMPANY NAME & ADDRESS]

[INSERT DATE]

Dear [INSERT LINE MANAGERS NAME]

As required by my contract of employment, please accept this letter as notice of my resignation from the position of [INSERT JOB TITLE]. I hereby give you [INSERT NOTICE PERIOD] weeks' notice of my intention to leave my position, completing my employment on [INSERT LAST DAY YOU INTEND TO WORK].

I wish both you and the company every good fortune and I would like to thank you for having me as part of your team and am thankful for the opportunities and experience you have given to me during my time here.

Yours sincerely, [INSERT YOUR NAME]

The Resignation Meeting

This meeting is best face-to-face with your Line Manager, ensure you have made the appointment to give you control over a possibly uncomfortable situation and have your resignation letter with you.

Depending on your reasons for leaving, you will probably feel a mixture of different emotions from upset to worry to guilt – it is vital you keep things as businesslike and unemotional as you can (even if you feel like getting everything off your chest!). You still need a reference, so as much co-operation with your handover as possible will ensure a smooth departure.

Work out what you are going to say and stick to it, be clear on how much information you are willing to divulge about your new position and employer. Always be as positive as you can about your time and relationships with people within the organisation, and offer help and assistance in making the transition and handover as easy as possible.

If you are going to a competitor, some companies will ask you to leave immediately so be prepared if this happens to you!

Be prepared for the "Counter Offer"

A counteroffer may be on the cards, so again, you need to be prepared. You may be offered more money, a promotion or other incentives to stay.

Consider this carefully, do not make any rash decisions, as flattering as it may be, remember the reasons why you were looking for another role in the first place – are the things which made you unhappy likely to be resolved long term? Your employer may be offering an immediate solution for a business reason, it may be cheaper and less inconvenient for them if they do not have to replace you, but ask yourself will anything change if you stay?

Remember that if you do accept a counter offer, it may change the relationship you have with your employer. In addition, you will not be able to resurrect the job offer you have just turned down, if in time you regret staying with your current employer.

I've told my Manager, what do I tell my colleagues?

You may be initially asked not to disclose your resignation to both colleagues, customers, clients or suppliers. This is done to assist the company manage the impact of you leaving, so it is important that you respect their request.

When you do tell them, it is a good opportunity for you to state your reasons for leaving clearly – rather than it become office gossip. Again, always keep your comments positive about the company and any colleagues

Working through your "Notice Period"

In most circumstances, you will be expected to work your "notice period" as stated in your contract of employment to ensure that your responsibilities are handed over to either a colleague or your replacement.

Make sure you remain as professional and helpful as possible whilst working your notice, keep to your hours and ensure you hand everything over to the best of your ability, including a "to do" list if necessary.

Remember – it is important that you remain calm throughout this process. Do not act hastily, handled correctly your resignation can become an important career and personal development tool.