

TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Performance reviews are most effective when they provide clear, actionable feedback that supports growth. Focus on behaviors, outcomes, and development opportunities, and avoid personal or protected information.

1. Avoid Absolutes Like “Always” or “Never”

Words like “always” or “never” can make feedback feel exaggerated or inaccurate. Tie observations to specific behaviors or timeframes.

- **Instead of:** “You never meet deadlines.”
Try: “Several recent reports were submitted after the deadline. Let’s discuss ways to ensure timely completion.”
- **Instead of:** “You always do a great job.”
Try: “Your attention to detail on the monthly reports consistently improves their accuracy and readability.”



Tip: Focus on specific behaviors, not generalizations.

2. Exclude Protected or Personal Information

Do **not** reference medical, family, or accommodation statuses—such as FMLA, ADA, or other protected leave—in a performance review.

- **Avoid:** “Even though you were on FMLA leave, you met your goals.”
- **Appropriate:** “You successfully completed your project goals and communicated effectively about progress and deadlines.”



Tip: Evaluate the quality and outcomes of work only.

3. Use Specific Examples and Clear Language

Concrete examples make feedback actionable. Avoid vague terms like “good attitude” or “needs improvement” without context.

- **Instead of:** “Provides great customer service.”
Try: “Responds to customer inquiries within one business day and resolves most issues on first contact.”
- **Instead of:** “Needs to communicate better.”
Try: “Team members have mentioned that project updates are sometimes unclear. Providing written summaries after meetings could help ensure shared understanding.”



Tip: Feedback should clearly indicate what to continue or what to change. If the employee doesn’t know the next step, the feedback isn’t actionable.

4. Balance Strengths and Opportunities

A well-rounded review acknowledges both achievements and areas for growth.

- **Example:** “You’ve built strong relationships with department partners, improving collaboration. Next, let’s focus on managing competing priorities to meet deadlines more consistently.”



Tip: Keep feedback forward-looking and development-focused, not just evaluative.