

Nine Points for Formal Grievance Writing

Adapted from “Points for Formal Grievance Writing” in the workbook from the Basic Stewards’ Training Seminar, AFGE Human Rights Training Conference, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 21-25, 1996

1. Limit Details to Basic Information:

Put only enough information in the grievance to identify the grievance so that management understands:

- a. What the basic problem is
- b. What violations occurred
- c. How the problem should be resolved.

2. Don’t Give Management Ammunition for Later:

On Written Grievances to Be Turned In To Management, leave out the Union’s arguments, evidence, and justification of position. That information could be used by management to prepare a better case against the Union.

3. Don’t Limit Contract Violations:

In stating why there is a grievance, use the phrase “violates the contract” and cite the specific articles and sections of the contract violated. Then add “and all relevant articles of the contract.”

4. Avoid Personal Remarks:

Remember, the grievance states the Union’s position, not yours or the grievant’s opinion.

5. Don’t Limit the Remedy:

If you limit the remedy asked for in the grievance, you might limit the Union to something less than full compensation to the grievant by leaving out something that you remember after the grievance was filed.

To make sure that all lawful and possible remedies are not overlooked, use phrases that leave room for those remedies.

6. Consult with the Grievant:

Go over the written grievance. Explain the requested remedy and get the grievant’s full understanding and agreement.

7. Maintain Solidarity:

If it concerns an appropriate issue, explain the grievance to the work group and be sure they understand your efforts on the issue.

8. Give Feedback and More Feedback:

Keep the grievant up to date on each action taken. Don't wait or rely on her or him to come to you. Make sure that the grievant gets a copy of all papers filed on her or his behalf. If it's decided that the grievance is not going to be taken to hearing at arbitration, let the grievant know.

9. Plan for Possible Arbitration:

Prepare each case on the assumption that it may go to hearing at arbitration. Proper preparation and case presentation within the grievance procedure may save the Local having to move to arbitration.