

Resigning with Class: How to Diplomatically Resign From Your Job

Strategies for Resigning with Class

The most important job-search rule to remember when resigning from any job is that you never want to leave on bad terms – if possible. Courtesy, etiquette, and professionalism go a long way. So, as much as you may want to tell off your boss or a co-worker, you should never burn any bridges. And don't spend time bragging to co-workers about your great new opportunity. Job-hunting is a funny process, and you never know when you'll run smack right into your former supervisor, a former co-worker, or a former employer through a merger or other circumstance.

So, once you are ready to announce your resignation, how can you make as smooth a transition from your current employer to your new one? You'll again want to act professionally – and follow company guidelines. Specifically, you need to consider:

- **Timing.** Give enough notice. The standard notice has traditionally been two to four weeks, but you should consult your employee handbook in case your employer expects more (or less) advance warning.
- **Negotiating.** Be sure to get a fair settlement for any outstanding salary, vacation (and sick and personal) days, and commission payments or other compensation due to you.
- **Hiring.** Offer to help your current employer find your replacement.
- **Training.** Volunteer to train or work with your replacement to show him or her “the ropes.”
- **Working.** Don't disappear during the last weeks on the job. Stay an active member of the team. Avoid taking a short-timer's attitude or aligning yourself with any discontented co-workers.
- **Completing.** Be sure to do your best to complete all open assignments and leave detailed progress reports for your supervisor and co-workers.
- **Leaving.** Before walking out the door for the last time, be sure you have contact information for key supervisors and co-workers that you want to keep part of your network of contacts – and be sure to thank them again for their support.

Here are some other issues you need to be prepared for once you announce your resignation:

- **Escorted out of the building.** In some industries and with some professions (such as sales), once an employee resigns, the employer asks the person to leave on the spot. Be prepared for this scenario by clearing personal files and removing personal software from your computer, removing personal information and belongings, and getting your workspace organized.
- **Guilt from co-workers or your boss.** It's only natural, especially if you are leaving an unpleasant work environment, that your co-workers may be a bit envious and try to make you feel a little guilty. And no matter how great your boss may be, s/he may also make you feel a little guilty for “deserting” the team. Try not to let these things bother you; instead, concentrate on making the final weeks/days pleasant and professional.
- **A counter-offer to entice you to stay.** Be very wary of counteroffers. No matter how good it makes your ego feel to have your current employer respond with a counteroffer, most career experts advise against taking it because studies show that the vast majority of employees who accept counteroffers from current employers aren't in those jobs for very long. Whether the employer admits it or not, your dedication will be questioned, and once that happens, your time on the job is limited. It's better to tactfully decline the offer and focus on your new job with your new employer.
- **An exit interview.** Some employers like to have all departing employees meet with someone from the human resources department for an exit interview. Be careful – but be professional. Some employers want to know the “real” reason you are leaving. Again, remember not to burn any bridges by saying anything negative or petty.

Writing a Professional Resignation Letter

What should you do once you've made the decision to take a job with another employer? You should take the time to write a letter of resignation to your current employer. It's best to have written documentation of your resignation and planned last day of work.

The most important thing to remember when writing your letter of resignation is to be professional – there is just no sense in making enemies. Regardless of whether you loved or hated your job or your employer, the outcome should be the same: a short, polite, and professional letter stating your intention to leave.

People leave their jobs for all sorts of reasons, and you certainly do not need to provide any details on why you are leaving the company. Resignation letters are a courtesy to your employer, so you simply need to state that you are leaving your current position to pursue other opportunities.

As you are composing your letter, please again remember that your job history follows you around, and that frequently the world is much smaller than we think. You never ever want to leave on bad terms with any employer – mainly because doing so could come back to haunt you later in your career.

When should you submit your letter of resignation? And to whom? You should submit your resignation two or more weeks before your planned resignation date (depending on company/profession policy). And you should submit the letter/memo to your direct supervisor, with a copy to your human resources office.

What exactly should you say in your letter of resignation? Here's a basic outline:

First Paragraph: State your intention of quitting your job and leaving the company. Give a specific last day of work.

Second paragraph: If you feel comfortable, give a reason why you are leaving – relocating, better job, career change, graduate school, etc. Or, reinforce your value by mentioning your key accomplishments with the employer (though doing so may trigger a counter offer).

Third Paragraph: Thank both your supervisor and the company for the opportunities you had working for them. Be sure to end the letter on a positive note.

One final note: Assuming you leave on a positive note with your supervisor and co-workers, once you have settled into your new job, remember to contact your former supervisor and co-workers and give them your updated contact information so that you can continue to keep them as a part of your job search network (because you never know when you'll be job-hunting again).