

Attendance warning email template

Address tardiness or absences with facts and expectations, while excluding protected leave.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

Attendance problems, such as late arrivals, early departures, and unexcused absences, are among the most common reasons for discipline, especially in hourly roles where every missed shift means someone else covers. An attendance warning sets out the facts, the policy, and what needs to change.

Before sending it, check every absence against protected leave. FMLA leave, state paid sick leave, ADA accommodations, jury duty, and military leave can't count against an employee. Many attendance claims start because a point system counted a protected absence. Ask the employee whether anything is causing the absences, because a health or family issue may lead to leave or an accommodation instead. Time and attendance software makes the facts easier to check.

Version 1: Attendance warning

SUBJECT Attendance: [Written or final] warning

Hi [Employee first name],

This email follows our conversation today about your attendance.

Our records show:

- [Date]: arrived [Number] minutes late, no call
- [Date]: absent, no call or notice
- [Date]: left [Number] hours early without approval

Under our attendance policy, [explain the relevant rule, such as employees must notify their supervisor at least two hours before a shift if they will be absent]. These incidents bring you to [Number] [points or occurrences] in the past [Period].

Going forward, we expect you to [specific expectation, such as arrive on time for scheduled shifts and call Manager name before your shift starts if you can't]. If attendance issues continue, it may lead to further discipline, up to and including termination.

If something is affecting your attendance, such as a health issue, family situation, or transportation problem, please tell me or [HR contact]. You may be eligible for leave or other support, and absences covered by protected leave won't count against you.

[Manager name]

Version 2: Gentle first check-in

SUBJECT Checking in about your schedule

Hi [Employee first name],

I noticed you have been late a few times recently ([Dates]). I wanted to check in before it turns into a bigger issue.

Is anything going on that's making it hard to get here on time? If your schedule needs to change, or if there's something we can help with, let's talk.

[Manager name]

Subject lines to try

- Attendance: [Written or final] warning
- Checking in about your schedule
- Follow-up on attendance
- Your attendance record and expectations
- Attendance policy reminder

How to personalize it

- List each incident with the date.
- Quote the specific attendance rule.
- Ask whether anything is causing the absences.
- Start with an informal check-in for first issues.

Mistakes to avoid

- Counting FMLA, sick leave, or accommodation absences.
- Applying the point system to some employees and not others.
- Ignoring the pattern for months, then issuing a final warning.
- Asking for medical details beyond what's needed.

Legal and compliance notes

Absences protected by the FMLA, ADA, PWFA, state paid sick leave, state family leave, USERRA, jury duty

laws, or voting leave laws can't be counted under an attendance policy. Several state sick leave laws also limit how much notice and documentation employers can require. No-fault attendance policies are lawful, but they must exclude protected absences. See our FMLA guide .

When to send it

When the pattern is clear and before it becomes a serious staffing issue. Hold the conversation first and send the email the same day.

Before you hit send

- HR or counsel reviewed the message if discipline or a complaint is involved.
- Facts are stated with dates, without opinions or labels.
- Protected leave or a recent complaint plays no part in the action described.
- Any request for discretion is narrow and explained, not a blanket ban.
- A copy is saved to the employee file or the case record.

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