

Performance improvement plan (PIP) email template

Put a performance improvement plan in writing with clear goals, support, check-ins, and consequences.

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

When to use this template

A performance improvement plan is a formal, time-bound plan that sets out where performance falls short, what success looks like, what support the company will provide, and what happens if the goals aren't met. Used well, it's a genuine last chance to succeed. Used badly, as a paper trail for a decision already made, it damages trust and creates legal risk.

This email follows the PIP meeting. It confirms the plan in writing so there's no confusion later. Make the goals specific and measurable, the timeline realistic, usually 30 to 90 days, and the support real. Our performance review guide covers when a PIP is the right tool and when it isn't.

Version 1: PIP confirmation

SUBJECT Your performance improvement plan

Hi [Employee first name],

Thank you for meeting with [Manager name] and me today. As we discussed, this email confirms your performance improvement plan. The full plan is attached.

Why we are using a plan: [Specific, factual description of the gap, with examples and dates, such as three of five client reports in March and April were submitted after the deadline, and two contained errors that clients raised].

What success looks like by [End date]:

1. [Specific, measurable goal]
2. [Specific, measurable goal]
3. [Specific, measurable goal]

Support we will provide: [Training, tools, weekly coaching, adjusted workload, or other help].

Check-ins: you and [Manager name] will meet every [week] on [Day] to review progress. You will receive written feedback after each meeting.

If you meet these goals, the plan will close. If you don't, the outcome may include further action, up to and including termination of employment.

We want you to succeed. If something is getting in the way, such as workload, unclear priorities, or a personal or health issue, please tell us so we can help.

[HR contact name]
[Title], [Company]

Version 2: Weekly check-in notes

SUBJECT PIP check-in notes: week of [Date]

Hi [Employee first name],

Thanks for meeting today. Here are my notes from our check-in.

Progress on goal 1: [Facts and examples]

Progress on goal 2: [Facts and examples]

Progress on goal 3: [Facts and examples]

Next steps: [What to focus on this week, and what support we will provide]

Overall, [honest assessment, such as you are on track for goals 1 and 2, and goal 3 needs focus].

Our next check-in is [Date].

[Manager name]

Subject lines to try

- Your performance improvement plan
- PIP check-in notes: week of [Date]
- Follow-up to today's meeting
- Performance plan: goals and next steps
- Your development plan through [Date]

How to personalize it

- Describe the gap with dates and examples, not opinions.
- Make each goal measurable and achievable within the timeline.
- Offer real support, such as training or time.

- Document every check-in in writing.

Mistakes to avoid

- Starting a PIP after the termination decision is already made.
- Placing someone on a PIP soon after a complaint or leave request without review.
- Vague goals like improve your attitude.
- Giving no prior warning before a formal plan.

Legal and compliance notes

Timing matters. A PIP that closely follows a protected activity, such as a harassment complaint, an FMLA request, a workers' compensation claim, or an accommodation request, can look like retaliation, even if the performance issues are real. Review the history with HR or counsel before starting one. If the employee mentions a medical issue, that may trigger the ADA interactive process. Apply PIPs consistently to employees with similar performance issues.

When to send it

Send the PIP email the same day as the meeting. Hold check-ins on schedule and summarize each one within a day. Close the plan on the end date with a written outcome.

Before you hit send

- Feedback is tied to specific examples and dates, not personality.
- Deadlines avoid peak workload periods and holidays.
- Nonexempt employees can complete the task during paid time.
- HR reviewed anything formal, such as a PIP, for timing and consistency.
- Employees know how their input will be used.

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