

TEAMSTER STEWARDS: A Quick Guide to Grievances

A union steward has several responsibilities to the members he/she represents. An effective advocate is critical to the vigorous and effective protection of a member's rights. For example, a steward, upon request of the member, is entitled to be present at a management investigatory interview of a member that could lead to discipline (see Weingarten rights section [link]). Because of the responsibility and authority which a steward is granted, they have a duty of Fair Representation to every member.

This quick guide to grievances will assist you in advocating grievances and protecting member's rights.

STEP 1 INVESTIGATION:

1. Get the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHY of the issue.
2. Be aware of the time limits to file a grievance listed in your Collective Bargaining Agreement.
3. Investigate every grievance as if it might go to arbitration.
4. Interview the grievant and identify which contract clauses may have been violated.
5. Interview any witness(es) and obtain copies of any relevant document(s).
6. Re-evaluate the issues involved after your investigation.
7. Keep in mind that the Employer must have "just cause" for disciplinary action.
8. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the grievance with the member.
9. Call your business agent to inform him of the situation.
10. Be aware and watch for opportunities to file group grievances, policy grievances or union grievances.
11. If you believe that the work issue is not grievable explain and discuss this with the grievant.
12. Discuss alternative ways to resolve the problem with the Grievant and the Business Agent.

STEP 2 WRITING THE GRIEVANCE

1. If you are unable to reach your Business Agent and timeliness is a concern, file a grievance.
2. Use a standard grievance form issued by the Employer. If you do not have a grievance form, go to Documents on our webpage and print a grievance form. (link to page here).
3. Write a simple, factual, brief description of the grounds for the grievance. The grievance should basically state what happened.
4. Cite every provision of collective bargaining agreement that may have been violated. Then add "and all other relevant contract articles and rules."

5. If a specific remedy is sought, describe the remedy and then include, “and all other benefits to which the grievant is entitled to make him/her whole.”
6. Send a copy of the signed grievance to your respective business agent.

STEP 3 EXPLORING SETTLEMENT OPTIONS

1. Find out Management’s position
2. Call your Business Agent and discuss agreeable settlement options and their effect.
3. Discuss the strength of the case and the next steps with the member.
4. Never settle a grievance without consulting the grievant and your business agent.
5. Any and all grievance settlements should always be in writing.
6. Don’t miss a time limit waiting for a settlement.
7. Be aware of any precedents a settlement may be setting.

AND REMEMBER A TEAMSTER STEWARD SHOULD AIM TO:

- Make yourself available to the members;
- Carefully listen to their concerns;
- Investigate issues/concerns in an effective and timely manner;
- Work closely with your fellow stewards
- Communication is critical – always:
 - Speak with members about their concerns,
 - Bring these concerns to management and learn management’s position,
 - Relay relevant information to your business agent, and
 - Listen to your business agent/union official to ensure that everyone is in agreement on an issue.
- Be an effective advocate for Teamster members and their workplace rights.