

## *10 Tips for Handling Grievances*

1. **Stay calm.** The grievance procedure is meant to provide for the orderly and fair resolution of work-related conflict. Don't take a grievance personally; frame it in objective and behavioral terms.
2. **Put the grievant at ease.** Listen non-judgmentally and strive to understand the grievant's viewpoint. Ask what specific remedy is sought.
3. **Reread the contract.** Confirm that the issue is covered by the bargaining agreement and the grievance is ripe. Follow prescribed timelines, or waive them by mutual agreement so you can decide the merits of the grievance.
4. **Clarify the burden.** Remember that management has the responsibility for proving the justification for any discharge or disciplinary matter, while the union bears the burden for enforcing a contract provision.
5. **Do your research.** Avoid snap judgments or rubber stamping earlier decisions. Conduct a proper investigation by gathering all the relevant facts and data, including the names of any witnesses. Be sure to document everything and create a record.
6. **Keep an open mind.** We all interpret events according to our own internal filters, which are shaped by experience, culture, etc. Don't assume that management's witnesses are more credible than the employee's or union's.
7. **Ask for help.** Seek advice from management or labor relations folks before you allow or deny a grievance. Be sure your decision doesn't conflict with the contract or with applicable law.
8. **Make an equitable decision.** Impose graduated discipline that is commensurate with the violation. Don't use a grievance to "get back" at an employee or union for some other action you didn't like.
9. **Communicate** the decision in a tactful and timely fashion.
10. **Keep it professional.** Separate the grievance process from your role and responsibility as a supervisor. Ensure that no employee experiences any retaliation for exercising rights under the contract.