

## How to Deliver the Message to a Terminated Employee



An article entitled “The Good Goodbye” outlines four methods parents typically use to say goodbye to their children on the first days of daycare or school. Its wisdom could be easily pasted into the pages of a management “how-to” book under the section, “How to Deliver the Message to a Terminated Employee.” When faced with a termination, here are the types of “goodbyes” a manager may choose from, with the last representing the best practice method for a termination of employment meeting.

### 1. The wishy-washy goodbye

“Are you sure you’re going to be okay? I know this wasn’t what you expected, and I’m so sorry that management made this decision. This must be really hard on you—I know I’m having a hard time with this.”

Terminations are non-negotiable, so be kind and humane, but also firm. You may express personal regret that the relationship is ending. However, the employee must realize that the termination decision is yours and not some indefinite “they” or “management.”

### 2. The slow and painful goodbye

“Let’s review the past write-ups that lead to your termination. That way you’ll have a thorough understanding of what you did wrong.”

If the decision to terminate employment was based on repeated coaching and counseling sessions with the employee, then the termination should not be a surprise. That said, there is no need to recount the employee’s past transgressions, as the purpose of this meeting is to deliver the news of the termination decision.

### 3. The commando goodbye

“I called you in to let you know today is your last day of employment. I wish you good luck in your job search.”


The employee will want to know, so share why the decision to terminate was made. For example, was it a performance issue, economic decision, layoff, etc.? However, do not become involved in recounting specific situations, recrimination, or prolonged discussions.



The entire meeting should not exceed five to ten minutes.

While the first three goodbye methods may get the job done, they often create more awkwardness and difficulty because things are said that should not be, or things are omitted that should be said. The confident goodbye is the ideal goodbye because it effectively conveys a difficult message to the recipient with dignity and respect.

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#### 4. The confident goodbye

“As an employer we try very hard to match the people we hire to the position they will occupy. Unfortunately, sometimes the needs of the company are not met in an employment relationship and we do a disservice to the employee if we keep the individual in that position. We have looked at your employment the past three months and have come to a difficult decision—we are discontinuing your employment effective today. We will pay you through (date). Regarding your ... (briefly discuss the final paycheck, collection of company property, supervised collection of employee’s personal belongings, benefit information, etc.)”

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