



## The Resignation

Even the best of job opportunities have their downside, and the decision to change jobs should never be made lightly. Once the decision has been made, however, it should be firm and final because reversing it could be a costly career mistake.

To understand why, assume you've been a valued employee. Your company will not want to lose you, particularly in the short-term, and will likely extend to you a counteroffer - a flattering inducement designed to tempt you into changing your mind. But as tempting and ego-gratifying as accepting a counteroffer may be, interviews with thousands of employees who have succumbed to them have shown that the vast majority suffered serious setback's to their careers. Only in the most isolated of incidents has the employee derived any significant benefit.

Since last impressions can be more powerful than first, it's a good idea to do all you can to be remembered as a professional and keep your references intact. During reference and background checks, potential employers might contact your former employers as far back as ten years or more.

Below are "**do's and don'ts**" to avoid burning your bridges, before and after you hand in your letter of resignation.



- **Do Prepare to Resign** - So there's no question about what belongs to you or the company, take personal property home, and remove personal files and software from your computer before you resign. Since you might get locked out of the building and computer network soon after quitting, you might not get to do all of this. Worse, it might look just a tad suspicious if you wait until after you resign to remove stuff from your office, especially from your computer and file cabinet.
- **Do Give Ample and Proper Resignation Notice** - The minimum resignation notice that U.S. employers typically require is two weeks, and they usually want it writing. Check your company's policy manual to be sure. If you don't follow company policy, not only might you burn a bridge, but you might also deprive yourself of termination benefits, such as pay for unused vacation. If you're leaving at a vulnerable time for your company, consider giving up to double the minimum notice. But if you've got to go, that's generous enough. Don't jeopardize your new job or let your current employer exploit you.
- **Do Offer to Help** – Consider offering to assist in finding and interviewing your replacement, Help out until your replacement is on board Break in your replacement But don't make promises you can't keep and again, don't let your current employer exploit you.
- **Do Say Good-Bye** - Take the time to talk with each of your bosses, coworkers and direct-reports. This is especially important to help squelch nasty water cooler rumors, such as you hated your job or were pressured to resign. But keep it positive and light, while choosing your words carefully. If asked why you're leaving, make general statements such as, **"It's a career opportunity I just can't pass up."** Avoid expressing too much regret, as it probably won't appear to be sincere. (Why would you have submitted your resignation if you truly regretted it?) Instead, express your appreciation and say that you'll miss working with them. If appropriate, distribute simple thank-you cards, notes or emails.

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- **Don't Jump the Gun** - Never submit your resignation letter until after you have a solid job offer in writing. There are countless stories of employees who've resigned based on verbal job offers that later fell through. How embarrassing and career-damaging might it be, to be forced to "cancel" your resignation?
  - **Don't Display a Short-Timer's Attitude** - Before handing in your resignation letter, make sure your work area and projects are in order and try to clear up unfinished business. Leave things in the same condition you'd like to see them if you were your boss or replacement. If stay through your resignation notice period, conduct business as usual and give a little extra effort to wrap things up. It's not a good time to exhaust your unused vacation or sick leave days.
  - **Don't Consort with the Boat Rockers** - Some of your discontented coworkers might prod you to criticize the company, bosses or other coworkers. But it's not a good idea. You never know who you can truly trust in the backstabbing corporate world, who your next boss might be or who is eavesdropping just around the corner in the cubicle maze.
  - **Don't Bite the Bait** - Your management or HR department might ask you for "constructive criticism" during your exit interview. But they might try to find out the "real" reason you've submitted your resignation. (Why did they wait until you quit to ask for your opinion?) Never criticize the company or its employees, no matter how much you want to say, "Take this job and shove it!" If they ask why you're resigning, make simple, noncommittal statements such as, "It's a career move." Avoid statements that can be misinterpreted, such as "It's a more challenging career opportunity." To those ready to pounce, this seemingly-innocent statement implies that you weren't happy with the job you've resigned. It might come back on you later, during background and reference checks.
  - **Don't Accept a Counteroffer** - Of course, this is your decision. But, despite how flattering it might be, many career advisors agree that it's not a good idea to accept a counteroffer. Once you've clarified that you want to jump ship, your loyalty will be in question. Your employer might make a counteroffer only to take advantage of you until they find a "more dedicated" or cheaper replacement. (Why did they wait until you resigned, to offer what you're really worth to them?) Try not to encourage a counteroffer by making statements such as, "I'm resigning because I need more money." Decline a counteroffer tactfully to avoid bad feelings. But, again, avoid expressing too much regret, as that might help them pressure you to stay.
  - **\*If anything is said that even sounds like a lead into a counteroffer, hold up your hand in universal "stop" sign** and say, "I didn't come here to force you into a bidding war or anything else. I simply have been presented with an opportunity I cannot pass up." Then use the statement that should be the basis for the last line of your resignation letter: "Is there anything that I can do to help during the transition time before my last day?"
  - **Don't Feel Guilty** - Employees quit all the time. No matter how guilty they try to make you feel, the company will survive without you. If you feel a guilt trip coming on, think about how the company would likely have axed you in a heartbeat without an ounce of guilt, if it was to its advantage. That happens all the time, too.
  - **Don't Take Anything the Company Owns** - This goes without saying, at least to those who aren't criminally insane. But it's just a reminder so you don't innocently overlook even simple things, like pens, calculators, manuals, CD ROMS, and other company-owned thingies you might carry in your briefcase to do your job. When compiling a portfolio of your work, make sure you're not taking proprietary materials, information, data, etc.

# Sample Resignation Letter

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Dear Mr. / Ms. Last Name:

Please accept this letter as my formal notice of resignation from [Company name], effective [date, two weeks from date above].

The associations I've made during my employment here will truly be memorable for years to come.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance during the transition, e.g., train my replacement, tie up loose ends, etc.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to work here.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Email Address

Address

cc [Names for copies]

*Just remember, a wonderful opportunity awaits you!*

