



# Performance Review Phrases You Should Use (and Some to Avoid)

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We created a helpful list of sample sentences to use on your next employee performance evaluation. These examples will craft a positive & productive review.



# Performance Review Phrases: An Essential List of Do's and Don'ts

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A [performance review](#) is an appraisal between a manager and an employee regarding that particular employee's performance. Employee reviews are particularly useful for soliciting and documenting feedback on an employee's performance, and they are often tied to positive or negative ramifications such as a promotion or a performance improvement plan. Performance reviews tend to take place at different cadences, and each company cadence is different.

We're sure some of your managers dread performance reviews—we get it! They can be time consuming and challenging. That's why we have put together some examples of performance review phrases that recognize both successful employee behavior and employee behavior in need of improvement. These phrases are helpful for keeping performance review conversations on the right track by focusing on employee behaviors, not character.

By no means is this a definitive list, but it is a great starting point.

# Performance Review

## Phrases to Highlight Good Performance

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The purpose of positive feedback is to reinforce desired behaviors through recognition and gratitude. Positive phrases like the ones below can be used in a performance review to articulate an employee's strengths in regards to work quality, punctuality, judgement, leadership, desire for self-growth, and communication.

- Actively seeks developmental feedback and acts on new feedback given
- Shows initiative to take on new projects or stretch assignments
- Shows interest in self growth and continues to take on additional team responsibilities and personal learning opportunities
- Exhibits clear and effective communication both internally facing and externally facing
- Sets clearly defined SMART goals and consistently delivers on them
- Is continually updating the team on industry or competitor trends, and demonstrates a strategic mindset
- Is on time to meetings and comes to meetings prepared with questions and contributions
- Is viewed as a stable change champion during times of turbulence on the team or within the organization
- Is able to persuade peers and colleagues, and successfully solicits 'buy-in' from stakeholders on projects with high stakes

- Develops creative and unique solutions to couple action and ideas with problems
- Receives above average feedback from customers
- Able to build strong relationships with customers and is seen as a trusted guide throughout the sales cycle
- Educates customers on new product offerings
- Succeeds with prioritizing projects correctly and attending to urgent matters in a timely fashion
- Optimizes administrative effectiveness by examining current methods and tools
- Holds themselves and those around them accountable for results
- Considered a critical member to the department
- Promotes a positive culture and exhibits the core values
- Continuously shares information and collaborates well with others
- Welcomes diversity and fosters inclusion with all colleagues and customers

# Performance Review

## Phrases to Highlight Areas of Improvement

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The purpose of developmental feedback is to draw attention to potential areas in need of improvement. Focus on behaviors—what was done (or not done), what work quality was delivered (or not delivered), and what was said (or not said).

The phrases below are a good starting point, but remember you need to provide specific examples of the action or behavior in question so that the employee can understand in which circumstances they fell short.

- Does not act on developmental feedback provided by managers or peers
- Tends to avoid ambiguous situations or projects where there isn't explicit instruction
- Shows little interest in self growth and does not take on additional team responsibilities or personal learning opportunities that are seen as 'outside of the job description'
- Often times is inflexible with project deadlines or scope changes
- Regularly communicates in an ineffective or inappropriate manner internally with colleagues or externally with customers
- Sets poorly defined SMART goals and misses deadlines
- Fails to manage expectations with project stakeholders when trending towards a missed deadline



- Does not provide updates on industry or competitor trends, and lacks a strategic mindset
- Has been late to numerous team meetings
- Has trouble remaining calm under pressure and conveying a stable nature to peers
- Lacks the ability to persuade colleagues and peers or solicit 'buy-in' from stakeholders
- Fails to contribute creative and unique solutions when presented with a challenge or new project
- Receives below average feedback from customers
- Struggles to build strong relationships with customers and is not seen as a trusted guide throughout the sales cycle
- Does not capitalize on speaking about new product offerings with customers  
Struggles to prioritize projects correctly and identify what makes a matter or project urgent
- Fails to evaluate current administrative tasks for effectiveness and area of improvement
- Fails to show accountability for their own actions and work
- At times can block or censor information and be seen as uncooperative
- Does not make a consistent effort to promote a positive and inclusive work environment

# Phrases You Should Never Use

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Always avoid using phrases that are overly negative, combative, or threatening, and be sure to stay far away from any phrases that could be seen as discriminatory based on a protected category like sex, race, religion, age, etc. Refrain from assuming intent, or saying things that would deteriorate the employee's trust or interest in the company. Lastly, never give an employee zero feedback at all, because even if it was a stellar performance there is always something that could be improved upon.

- If we need to have another conversation like this again, you're out of here.
- You're walking on thin ice lately, you really need to turn it around this quarter. What's your plan?
- Do you want to tell me what happened with project X? I could tell that you never really cared about it anyways because you put in minimal effort from the beginning.
- You missed our team event on (date) because you were OOO for X holiday. I would have liked you to be there to bond with the team. It was a blast!
- Do you actually want that promotion? You'll never see your kids or husband.
- I understand that you decided to pass on heading up project X due to your maternity leave. Having a child is the most rewarding experience, congratulations! We won't be able to consider you for a promotion this time around, but we will definitely continue the conversation when you return.
- Other members on the team are producing better quality and quantity of work, we need you to pull your weight and kick it into high gear for the remainder of the year.
- You did absolutely great! I have no points of contention.
- I'm really sorry, but I'm so busy and don't have time to meet to discuss your review. I'll send you my notes, but overall you did awesome!

[Performance reviews](#) can be an unnerving time for employees and managers. Employees will appreciate you providing them with clear, specific, and actionable feedback about their performance so they can either continue to replicate good behavior, or so they can take action to improve poor behavior. For more insight into how to conduct a productive performance review, check out our other article on [questions to ask during an evaluation](#).

Lastly, remember that all feedback, positive or negative, should be delivered with empathy and compassion—imagine yourself on the other side of the table, how would you want to be spoken to?







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