

10 Things You Should Do Immediately After Being Fired

June 25, 2012, at 8:18 a.m. + More



Alison Green

If you've just heard the words, "you're fired," don't panic. By staying calm, you'll be better able to take steps that will help you [get over this hump faster](#). Here are 10 things you should do immediately after losing your job:

1. **Don't freak out.** Try to prevent your emotions from getting the better of you. The calmer you stay, the faster you'll get past this crisis and into the next stage of your life.
2. **Don't do anything rash or bitter.** As satisfying as it might be to send former co-workers or client lists an email about everything that's wrong with that company, don't do it. You need to protect your reputation now more than ever, and a bitter, hostile exit will make that impossible.
3. **Don't sign a severance agreement immediately.** Many companies routinely offer fired employees severance payments in exchange for signing a "general release." This would release the company from any legal claims stemming from your employment. If you're offered this, don't sign on the spot. Take some time to look over the agreement and consider running it by a lawyer. You might be able to negotiate a higher payment.
4. **Contact your former employer to negotiate the way your departure will be described to potential employers in the future.** Simply by asking, you might be able to [get your former company to agree](#) to describe your separation in neutral terms, or at least to confirm dates of employment only.
5. **Get your finances in order.** Review your budget for the next few months, and cut out any expenses you can. Assume that you might not have any money coming in for at least a few months, so pare your spending down to the essentials.
6. **File for unemployment.** People often think that only laid-off employees are eligible for these benefits. However, in most states, fired employees can collect too, as long as they weren't fired for intentional misconduct. It can take a while for benefits to kick in, so file right away.
7. **If you've been putting off any health care appointments, make them now.** You'll probably still have your employer's health care until the end of the month, so get any doctor and dentist appointments in while you still have insurance. (You can also choose to extend your coverage through the federal program

COBRA.)

8. Think about who you want to keep in touch with from your last job—not just co-workers, but clients and vendors too. [Reach out to them](#). A good way to mitigate awkwardness with former co-workers who might be unsure how to handle your firing: Tell them what you liked about working with them and why they are good at what they do. People will be impressed by your classiness.

9. Once a few days have gone by and you've started to process the news, take an objective look at what happened. Don't feel defensive or ashamed; try to see it the way an outsider might. Do you understand why your boss let you go? Are there lessons that you can learn for your next job?

10. Remember that you're not alone. Lots of good people before you have been fired and gone on to have successful careers. You'll get past this too.

*Alison Green writes the popular [Ask a Manager](#) blog, where she dispenses advice on career, job search, and management issues. She's also the co-author of *Managing to Change the World: The Nonprofit Manager's Guide to Getting Results*, and former chief of staff of a successful nonprofit organization, where she oversaw day-to-day staff management, hiring, firing, and employee development.*