

Incident Log

A simple, private record of what happens at work. It helps you see patterns, trust your own perception and, if it ever comes to that, prove what happened.

Why keep a log?

Manipulation works through doubt. After weeks of small incidents, it becomes hard to say what exactly happened and when. Memories blur, and a boss who claims "that never happened" gains ground.

A log changes that. It turns a vague feeling into a list of facts. It shows you whether you are dealing with a bad day or a pattern. And it gives you something solid if you decide to talk to HR, a works council, a lawyer or a doctor.

You may never need to show it to anyone. Keeping it is still worth it, because it protects the clearest witness you have: your own memory.

How to use this log

- 1 **Write it down the same day.** Notes made close to the event carry the most weight.
- 2 **One incident, one entry.** Date, time, place, who was there.
- 3 **Facts first, then feelings.** Describe what was said and done. Your reaction gets its own field.
- 4 **Quote exact words** where you can, in quotation marks.
- 5 **Note the evidence** that exists: emails, messages, calendar entries, witnesses.
- 6 **Keep it private and safe,** never on a company device or account.

Print it or copy it. Use the blank pages that follow, or copy the fields into a private notebook or a document on your own device. What matters is that you write regularly, not which format you use.

What makes a record useful

Do

- **Be specific.** "On March 4, in the team meeting, he said my report was 'useless' in front of six colleagues" is worth more than "he humiliates me".
- **Stay neutral.** Write as if a stranger will read it. Leave out labels such as "narcissist" or "psycho".
- **Record small things too.** A single remark proves little. Twenty remarks over three months show a pattern.
- **Write down the impact.** Sleep problems, sick days, a doctor's visit, a missed opportunity. Health effects often matter later.
- **Note what you did.** Did you object, ask for clarification, inform someone? It shows that you acted reasonably.
- **Keep copies** of what you are allowed to keep, such as emails addressed to you, your own appraisals and your contract.
- **Never change old entries.** If you remember something later, add a new note with today's date.

Don't

- **Don't record conversations secretly.** In many countries and US states this is illegal, and it can cost you your job and your credibility. Check the law where you work first.
- **Don't forward confidential company documents** to your private email or take them home. That can be a breach of your contract, even if your intentions are good.
- **Don't exaggerate.** One inaccurate entry can make the whole log look unreliable.
- **Don't keep it at work.** No work laptop, no company cloud, no shared drive. Your employer may have access.
- **Don't announce it.** Telling your boss "I'm keeping a file on you" escalates the conflict and rarely helps you.

When to get help. If your health suffers, if you are threatened, or if you think about taking formal steps, speak to a doctor and to a lawyer or employee representative in your country. Bring your log. It will make that conversation much more productive.

This log is general guidance, not legal advice. Employment and privacy laws differ from country to country. More on documenting incidents, confronting your boss and when to escalate: *Breaking Free from Toxic Leadership*, Chapters 4 and 5.

EXAMPLE

A completed entry

A fictional example to show the level of detail that helps. Short is fine, as long as it is concrete.

DATE AND TIME <i>Tue, May 12, around 10:15</i>	PLACE <i>Meeting room 3 (team meeting)</i>	WHO WAS INVOLVED <i>My manager (J. M.)</i>
WHAT HAPPENED (FACTS ONLY) <i>I presented the Q2 figures. J. M. interrupted after two minutes and said in front of the team that I had "obviously not understood the brief" and should "leave this to people who can handle it". He then gave the topic to a colleague. The brief I received by email on May 5 asked for exactly the figures I presented.</i>		
EXACT WORDS <i>"You've obviously not understood the brief." / "Leave this to people who can handle it."</i>		
WITNESSES <i>A. K., T. R., S. L. (and three more team members)</i>	EVIDENCE <i>Email with the brief from J. M., May 5, 16:40 (saved as PDF at home)</i>	
IMPACT ON ME <i>Embarrassed, couldn't concentrate for the rest of the day. Slept badly. Third time this month that a task was taken away from me in public.</i>	WHAT I DID / NEXT STEPS <i>Said calmly that I had followed the brief from May 5. After the meeting, sent J. M. a short email asking what exactly he expected. No answer yet (May 13).</i>	

Notice what the example does: it separates facts from feelings, quotes the exact words, names witnesses by initials, points to a document that contradicts the criticism, and shows that this is not the first time. The follow-up email turns a spoken remark into a written trace.

OVERVIEW

Timeline at a glance

One line per incident. After a few weeks, this page shows you whether there is a pattern.

DATE AND TIME	PLACE	WHO WAS INVOLVED
WHAT HAPPENED (FACTS ONLY) 		
EXACT WORDS 		
WITNESSES 	EVIDENCE 	
IMPACT ON ME 	WHAT I DID / NEXT STEPS 	

DATE AND TIME	PLACE	WHO WAS INVOLVED
WHAT HAPPENED (FACTS ONLY) 		
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