

Suggestions for Interviewing The Grievant

1. **SET A TIME** to discuss the grievance when you won't feel rushed. If you only have a few minutes, the grievant might feel that you don't think their problem is important.
2. **LET THE GRIEVANT EXPLAIN** the problem. If he or she is upset, just listen for a while. Then ask questions to get the full story. Be patient, listen carefully and make eye contact. Make sure you've got the facts right on key points. (*"So he told you it wasn't important one day, but the next day he wrote you up for it? How did he explain that?"*) When something isn't clear, don't hesitate to ask it again. (*"I missed something there. Would you go over that again?"*) If the grievant makes statements like, "Everybody else does..." or "The supervisor always told us..." get the specifics: who, what, when, where, and who else would testify to it?
3. **KEEP CLEAR NOTES** of your discussion. You might use the grievance fact sheet to make sure you've asked all the basic questions.
4. **EXPLAIN WHY** you want to have all the facts before you meet with the supervisor. Tell the grievant when you don't know something that the company knows, it only hurts the union's chance of winning the grievance.
5. **TRY TO FIGURE OUT** the company's position. If the company's actions don't make sense, you're probably missing something. Ask the grievant why they think the company did what it did, or how it will justify its actions in the grievance meeting. Remember, grievants naturally tell their own side of the story. Explain that you're trying to figure out what the company will say to be better prepared for the meeting.
6. **EXPLAIN RELEVANT** contract language, what determines just cause, prior grievance settlements on similar issues, and anything else that will help the grievant understand the strengths and weaknesses of the grievance. Ask the grievant what he or she wants done to resolve the problem, and discuss the possibilities of winning that settlement. And never promise a victory, even when you are sure you will win.
7. **TELL THE GRIEVANT** what you will do next. Are you getting information from the company? Will you be interviewing others before the grievance meeting? When is the meeting, or when will you set it up? One way to avoid misunderstandings with the grievant is to keep him or her informed at every step of the procedure until the grievance is settled.

