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Don't feel overwhelmed: A guide to writing investigation memorandums

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Conducting a workplace investigation can be daunting. It usually involves an allegation, an employee or perhaps a vendor, along with witnesses who have their own takes on what occurred. However, the hard part of the investigative process comes after you have finished conducting the interviews.

Writing a post-investigation memorandum can seem overwhelming because there really is very little room for error. You must ensure the reader's interpretation of the memorandum is what you intended it to be. It also must be easy to understand yet comprehensive without being verbose. One of the best pieces of advice I have ever received from a former manager is to write the memorandum as if you are writing it for your grandmother, meaning it needs to be concise, easy to understand, and without any judgment or opinion. You are essentially retelling a story, perhaps to someone who was not familiar with the investigation at all or even with your company, and they will need to understand everything from how the investigation started to how it ended.

Most of the memorandum should not include your opinion, so it must be written in an objective manner without phrases such as, "it seems" or "perhaps" when discussing what has occurred. You are simply putting to paper the perspectives of others; this is the sole goal of the memorandum.

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