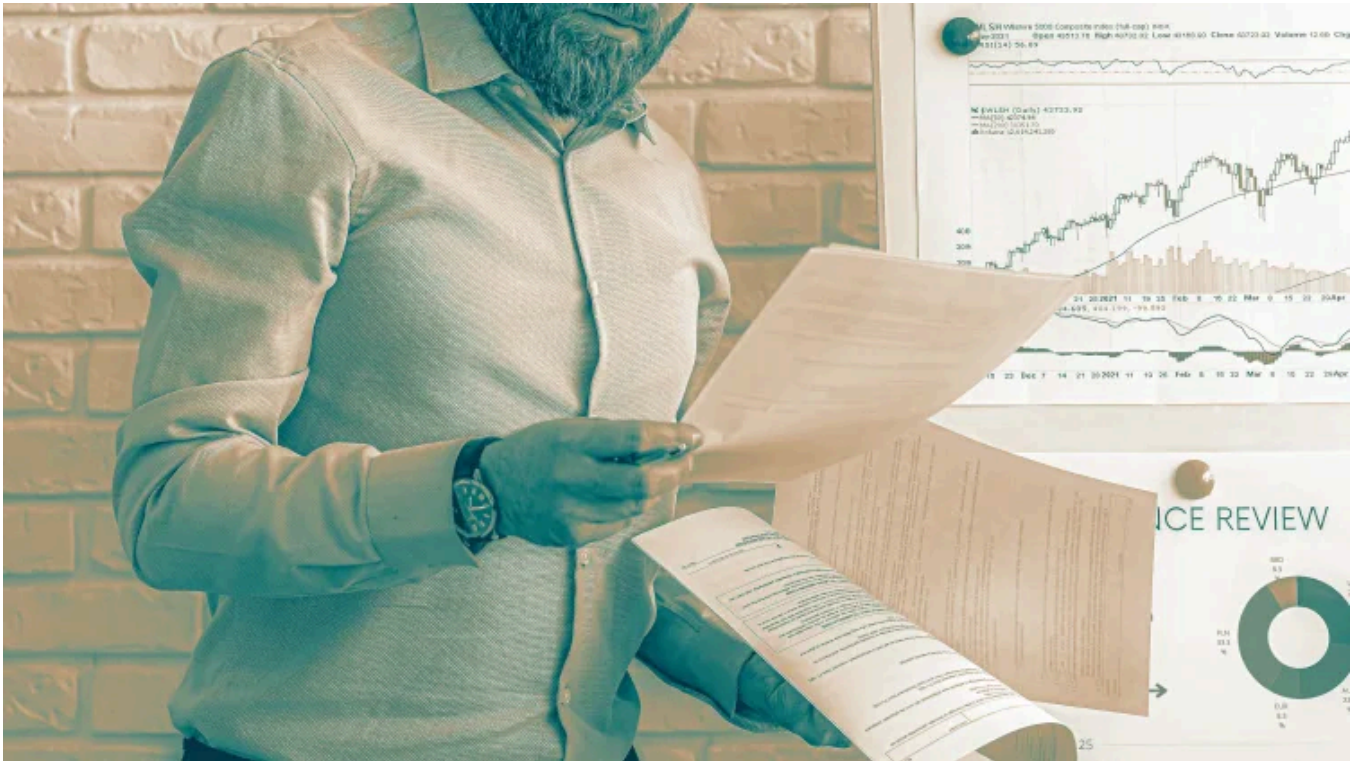


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What can I do if I disagree with my performance review?

Here's what you can do if you find yourself on the receiving end of a negative performance review that you disagree with.



[Source Photo: [kaboompics/Pexels](#)]

BY **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 2 MINUTE READ

Welcome to *Pressing Questions*, Fast Company's work-life advice column. Every week, deputy editor Kathleen Davis, host of *The New Way We Work* podcast, will answer the biggest and most pressing workplace questions.

Q: What can I do if I disagree with my performance review?

A: *Performance reviews* aren't well liked by many managers or employees. Many managers feel like it's just another box to check and employees feel like they make no real impact in their career growth. At some companies, performance reviews primarily exist mostly as a punitive tool for

underperforming employees. I'm an advocate for performance reviews (when done well) and think that they shouldn't be a **dreaded task once a year**, but instead part of an ongoing conversation.

But unless you are in the CEO or in HR leadership at your company, you likely don't have the power to change the format of your company's performance reviews. So here's what you can do if you find yourself on the receiving end of a negative performance review that disagree with.

HAVE A CONVERSATION FIRST

It may help for you to put a few talking points down before you speak to your manager. This allows you to ensure you don't forget anything and can stick to relevant information. In most performance reviews, employees do a self-evaluation first and then their manager responds. If you thought you met expectations but your manager disagrees, you both should have evidence to back up your statements. Talking it through can help you both understand if there was a miscommunication in expectations.



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STICK TO THE FACTS

Much like in **salary negotiations**, it's important to stick to facts not feelings. Even if you think your manager isn't fairly evaluating you, your best approach is to come with irrefutable facts—data, emails, whatever you need to show that the negative performance review is wrong.

DON'T SIGN. OR SIGN WITH A DISCLAIMER

Most performance review processes end with both the employee and manager signing that they are in agreement of the assessment. If you and your manager can't come to an agreement you can refuse to sign the negative review, although that could be viewed as hostile, and ultimately not have a tangible impact. (After all, most employees are considered "at will," meaning that they can be fired without cause.) Instead, you can sign the review with a disclaimer that you disagree with some of the assessment because of certain stated facts.

MAKE A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

What you do next depends on how your conversations with your manager went and your relationships with others. If you came to an agreement that there are areas for improvement, make sure you have agreed on clear expectations for what improvement looks like, and get it in writing. Then set up regular check-ins.

Performance reviews should never come as a surprise. If they do, it likely means employees and managers aren't checking in regularly (or not checking in effectively). If you can't reach an agreement with your manager, it's likely time to bring their manager or HR into the conversation so you can get more clarity on expectations.

Want some more advice on performance reviews?

- **This 3-step approach to performance reviews uses neuroscience to make them less awful**
- **10 reasons why we still need performance reviews (and how to improve them)**
- **Good performance reviews have these 3 elements**
- **How to ensure your performance review doesn't suck this year**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathleen Davis is Deputy Editor at FastCompany.com and Host of [The New Way We Work](#) podcast.. She frequently writes and edits topics including career, hiring, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, [gender equity](#), [education](#) and [child care](#), economic inequality, remote work, and the future of work [More](#)