

How to Do a Check-In

A Check-in is a brief, under-five-minute conversation designed to connect with your employees, offer support, and boost productivity.

1) Set the Tone

Approach the Check-in casually and positively. Find a comfortable spot and ensure the employee feels at ease.

2) Ask Open-Ended Questions

Start with questions that invite conversation and insight:

“How are things going today?”

“What’s been your biggest win today?”

“Is there anything blocking your progress?”

3) Listen Actively

Show you’re paying attention: nod, make eye contact, and avoid interrupting. Reflect on what they say to demonstrate understanding.

4) Provide Encouragement and Feedback

Acknowledge their efforts and provide constructive feedback:

“You’re doing great with [specific task]. Keep it up!”

“I noticed [specific challenge]. Have you considered trying [suggestion]?”

5) Offer Support and Resources

Ask how you can help:

“Is there anything you need from me to make this easier?”

“I can connect you with [resource] if that would help.”

6) Wrap Up with Positivity

End on a positive note, reinforcing your support:

“Thanks for sharing. Let’s catch up again soon!”

“I appreciate your hard work. Keep pushing forward!”

Do's

Tips for successful check-ins

Be Consistent: Weekly Check-ins build trust and show that you're invested in your team's success.

Keep It Brief: Stick to the main points; Check-ins are meant to be quick touchpoints, not formal meetings. Under five minutes.

Be Present: Avoid distractions like your phone or computer during Check-ins. Give your full attention.

Follow Up: If issues were raised that cannot be addressed, say, "Let's schedule an appointment to discuss that." Make sure to follow up with the employee to show that their concerns were heard and addressed.

Don'ts

Common pitfalls to avoid

Don't Make It About You: Focus on the employee; this is their time to share and be heard.

Avoid Problem-Solving Mode: Sometimes, just listening is more valuable than immediately offering solutions. Avoid *telling*.

Don't Rush or Seem Distracted: A check-in is short but your full engagement is essential.

NOTE: Check-ins are small but powerful opportunities to connect with your team, and foster a supportive work environment. Use them to motivate, coach, and drive positive performance.

About the Author

Mike Mears started and ran the CIA Leadership Academy and retired as CIA's Chief of HR. His book [CERTAINTY: How Great Bosses Can Change Minds and Drive Innovation](#) is out now. He graduated from West Point and Harvard Business School. [Subscribe to his leadership insights newsletter.](#)