

# Types of Grievances

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A steward can classify grievances according to where they come from and how they arise. We also classify grievances according to who is affected.

## Individual Grievances

An individual grievance is a complaint that an action by management has violated the rights of an individual as set out in the collective agreement or law, or by some unfair practice. Examples of this type of grievance include: discipline, demotion, classification disputes, denial of benefits, etc. The steward should file the grievance, not the employee on his/her own, as it is in the interest of everyone in the union that the grievance be handled properly. When an individual's rights have been violated and that person refuses to file a grievance, the steward should file the grievance on behalf of the union – especially if the contract specifically permits. In this way, the steward will defend the collective agreement and protect the rights of all employees covered by it. The management's argument that the steward cannot file an individual grievance on behalf of the union is false.

## Group Grievances

A group grievance is a complaint by a group of individuals, for example, a department or a shift that has been affected the same way and at the same time by an action taken by management. An example of a group grievance would be where the employer refuses to pay a shift premium to the employees who work on afternoon shift when the contract entitles them to it. Clearly, they should grieve the matter as a group rather than proceeding by way of individual grievances.

## Policy Grievance

A policy grievance is a complaint by the union that an action of management (or its failure or refusal to act) is a violation of the agreement that could affect all who are covered by the agreement. Group grievances are often treated as policy grievances, but strictly speaking, they should be considered separately. A policy grievance normally relates to the interpretation of the contract rather than the complaint of an individual.

However, a policy grievance may arise out of circumstances that could also prompt an individual grievance, insofar as the union claims the action taken by management implies an interpretation of the collective agreement that will work to the detriment of all employees. For example, management assigns a steady day-shift employee to work on an off shift without regard to seniority. The union might grieve in an effort to establish that seniority must be considered in such an assignment, even though the individual involved might have no complaints against the shift change. The point is that **the outcome or the precedence of the grievance may have a detrimental effect on the local union at some point in the future and the union must challenge it.**

## Union Grievance

A union grievance may involve a dispute arising directly between the parties to the collective agreement. For example, the union would grieve on its own behalf if management failed to deduct union dues as specified by the collective agreement. In these cases, the union grievance is one in which the union considered its rights to have been violated, and not just the rights of individuals in the local union.