

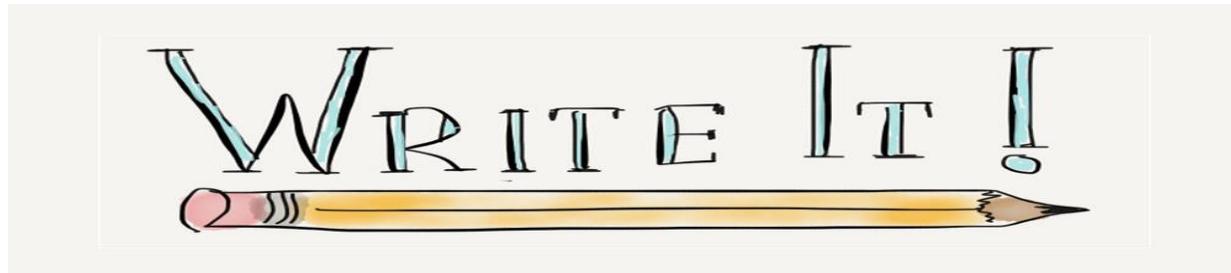
Get it in Writing

As shop stewards we spend a lot of time talking -- preaching unionism; communicating important information about our job; educating members about critical legislative issues; or just telling members what they missed at the monthly union meeting.

We live in a talking culture. We forget to put things down in writing. That's not what they teach in business school or in law school. Supervisors and lawyers have been trained to put everything down on paper. It allows them to control what is called the record. If you go into a grievance meeting and your supervisor takes notes, chances are those notes will form what is called the record of the meeting. Your memory and their memory can be faulted. Notes cannot. That is why it is important to get into the habit of buying a small notebook and using it in all of your capacities as a steward. Most important, use it while you are handling complaints and grievances.



In your interview step with the member, write down what he or she says. Don't worry about spelling. Just get it down. Use your grievance interview sheet to help write down the story. The very act of writing the member's story down conveys a professional image of your role to the member. And just as important, the member will be more truthful in giving you the whole story -- warts and all. Sometimes members think they are helping the steward by embellishing a story to make it more convincing. Our role as steward is to get the truth and get the member justice. The act of writing contributes to that goal. Taking notes in the grievance meetings conveys a sense of no-nonsense and professionalism to your employer counterparts as well.



Remember; get into the habit of writing down everything.