



Stay Interviews: The Basics

1. What is a stay interview?

- a. Stay interviews are conversations between an employee and their direct supervisor to discuss the employee's needs, goals, and engagement.
- b. Stay interviews are NOT performance evaluations of an employee. Rather, stay interviews provide employees with the opportunity to provide feedback to their employer. Employees tell their employer about what specific actions the employer can take to strengthen the employee's engagement and retention.

2. Why is UW-Madison introducing stay interviews?

- a. Stay interviews are beneficial for everyone involved: employees, supervisors schools/colleges/divisions, and the entire UW-Madison community.
- b. Research demonstrates that stay interviews increase employee engagement, [retention](#), satisfaction, productivity, and trust between employees and their supervisors.
- c. [Research](#) shows that having a good relationship with a direct supervisor is the primary reason employees stay longer and work harder at their organization. Stay interviews reinforce good relationships and repair weak ones.
- d. Stay interviews reveal why employees are staying and why they might want to leave. These interviews highlight what employees like about work and allow UW-Madison to continue enhancing those strengths. Stay interviews also uncover issues early enough so UW-Madison can be proactive in resolving them.
- e. Stay interviews show UW-Madison employees in a direct, positive way that their employer cares about them. Stay interviews demonstrate that UW-Madison desires to improve the employee experience by providing employees the opportunity to voice feedback and better align their daily work to their professional interests.
- f. Stay interviews decrease recruitment costs and take pressure away from current staff. According to a [2021 SHRM study](#), the average cost per hire is nearly \$4,700.
- g. Stay interviews offer a tool to help UW-Madison track trends in engagement and retention across campus.

3. When should stay interviews be conducted?

- a. Stay interview should be about 30 minutes each.
- b. Stay interviews are most effective when conducted once every sixth months, on an opposite cycle from performance reviews. (For example, if performance evaluations are held in June and December, stay interviews should be held in September and March.) Since stay interviews are NOT performance evaluation conversations, they should never be held in the same meeting.
- c. Stay interviews should start three (3) months after an employee joins the team.
- d. Stay interviews can take place during a preexisting regular 1:1 check-in meeting that occurs between the employee and their supervisor.
- e. Stay interviews may also be conducted when a triggering event occurs. [Research](#) shows that job search activity increases by 17% when there is a change in manager responsibility, so an additional stay interview may be conducted when such events occur. Supervisors may also conduct an additional stay interview if they notice an employee seems unmotivated or disengaged.

4. Where should stay interviews take place?

- a. It is best practice to hold stay interviews in person. If that is not possible, they can be held virtually.



- b. Supervisors are encouraged to hold stay interviews in a location where the employee feels comfortable speaking freely. Avoid meeting in heavily trafficked public areas that may discourage employees from answering questions candidly.
- c. Consider power dynamics. Try meeting in a location where the supervisor and employee are seated at the same level and feel like equals (i.e. around a shared table).

5. How should stay interviews be conducted?

Before the interview:

- a. Stay interviews are more effective when certain organizational dynamics exist before the interview even begins. Stay interviews work best when there is a preexisting positive relationship between an employee and their supervisor such that the employee feels comfortable openly sharing feedback with their supervisor.
- b. Supervisors can prepare for the interview by reading through the stay interview questions in advance, preparing potential follow-up questions, and silencing their notifications to eliminate distractions.
- c. Supervisors should notify the employee of the stay interview via email 1-2 weeks ahead of time and provide the list of questions in advance.

During the interview:

- d. Actively listen. Supervisors are advised to spend 80% of the interview listening and the other 20% asking questions and checking for understanding.
- e. Supervisors are encouraged to ask a lot of follow-up questions.
- f. Supervisors are recommended to be open-minded about what the employee is saying.
- g. If necessary, offer the employee a list of resources (i.e. EAO & LifeMatters).
- h. Supervisors can end the discussion by reiterating the most important positive item and most important negative item addressed, pinpointing specific action steps, and telling the employee when they will be followed up with.
- i. Thank the employee for their time.

After the interview:

- j. Supervisors must follow-through with the employee about the comments and requests they agreed to follow-through on. Without this essential step, stay interviews will not benefit the employee nor the supervisor.
- k. Focus on enhancing one positive aspect of the employee's work experience. Ask the employee if they have suggestions on how to do so.
- l. Focus on repairing one negative aspect of the employees work experience. Ask the employee if they have suggestions on how to do so.