

Steward's Rights

As a *Teamster Steward*, you have been given the responsibility to represent your members — a job that some bosses would like to keep you from doing. Here's a brief list of some of your rights and obligations.

1. **You have the RIGHT to grieve any contract violation** — whether you saw it happen or someone calls it to your attention. Bosses may accuse you of "soliciting grievances," but don't be fooled! It's your duty to encourage workers to grieve legitimate violations of the contract — or file them yourself.
2. **You have the RIGHT to carry out investigations of grievances**, including interviews of grievants and witnesses. Some Teamster contracts provide for investigation on "company time." For those that don't, there is often a clear past practice that allows this. But, if not, every grievance must be investigated as thoroughly as necessary, even if it's on your own time.
3. **You have the RIGHT to organize and encourage your fellow workers to take action** in support of an issue or grievance, so long as it doesn't take place on work time and interfere with production. The boss can't stop you from getting people to wear stickers, sign petitions, carry signs, or take similar actions on break or lunch time. (Of course, stickers, buttons and caps can be worn *all* the time, unless there's a special reason for a dress code.)
4. **You have the RIGHT to request the information you need to process a grievance** from management. You should put these requests in writing. Management is obligated to respond.
5. **You have the RIGHT to be present** in any meeting between the boss and an employee if it might lead to discipline.
6. **You have the RIGHT to be present every time a grievance is being "adjusted" or settled.** Even if a worker has taken up the grievance on their own, the boss cannot bypass the contract when a settlement occurs.
7. **You have the RIGHT to stand toe-to-toe with your boss when you're conducting union business.** You can get loud, angry, forceful, and speak your mind during grievance meetings. This is the "Equality Principle" that says you and the boss are equals in grievance discussions.

All of these rights are legally guaranteed, but they depend on how well you use them. When you do, your members will find *their* rights are protected, too.