

Case 11: Why are Jordy and Gia paid different rates?

Jordy and Gia worked the same Saturday event, but Gia's pay rate is \$1.50 an hour higher, and Jordy wants to know why.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the two pay rates and the job title on the schedule. About 5 minutes.



Mateo attaches an arrival notice at the Common Room entrance. Gia points to the doorway, and Jordy checks what a visitor will see.

Your role: You're the one who lines up both shifts side by side before Jordy writes to Dana. **New skill:** Compare two cases on the same terms.

What happened

Jordy and Gia work event shifts for the same company. They both worked a Saturday event from 3 to 11 p.m. Both helped with setup and closing, and Jordy also ran the caption and audio check.

They were paid the following Friday. On Sunday afternoon, Jordy and Gia compare pay statements. Jordy's lists eight hours at \$16.50 an hour. Gia's lists \$18.00 an hour for the same event.

The crew schedule lists Gia as "shift lead," but it does not say what that job includes. That day, Gia opened up and handled one guest issue. She does not know if that explains the \$1.50 difference. Gia is fine with Jordy knowing her rate. But she does not want her statement posted.

Jordy wants to ask Dana, the supervisor, how rates are set. Jordy will not post anything before Dana answers.

Your question: Why is Gia paid more than Jordy for the same event, and how should Jordy ask about it?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess about the pay difference. About 5 minutes.

Compensation Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.

En español: compensación

In this case: Jordy's statement shows eight hours at \$16.50 an hour, and Gia's shows \$18.00. The statements show the rates but not how they were set.

Equal Pay Act The Equal Pay Act is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work.

En español: Ley de Igualdad Salarial

In this case: The Equal Pay Act covers pay differences based on sex, not every difference. Different job duties, such as a real shift-lead role, can be a lawful reason.

Title VII Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

En español: Título VII

In this case: Title VII covers pay decisions based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. No document shows how Jordy's rate was set.

Who is involved



Jordy

Worked setup through close

"Three to eleven, setup to close, and I ran the caption and audio check. \$16.50 an hour. Gia's says \$18.00."



Gia

Listed as shift lead

"I only found out I make more because Jordy showed me theirs. The schedule calls me shift lead. Nobody told me what that pays for."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Gia is paid more than Jordy?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Pay equity, comparators and the right to ask

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Compensation:** Compensation is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime.
- **Equal Pay Act:** The Equal Pay Act is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work.
- **Title VII:** Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.
- **Gross pay:** Gross pay is the money you earn before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

The story: Discovering a differential

Jordy and Gia work event shifts for the same company. On a Saturday, both worked from 3 to 11 p.m. and shared setup and closing. Jordy also ran the caption and audio check. The schedule named Gia “shift lead” without defining the role. On Sunday, comparing statements, they find a \$1.50 hourly difference: \$16.50 for Jordy and \$18.00 for Gia.

The case models how most workers actually discover pay differences, which is informally, through a coworker. Gia learns she is paid more only because Jordy shows her. Neither of them knows the policy behind the rates. Gia can describe what she did as lead, opening up and handling one guest issue, but not whether the company values that at \$1.50 an hour.

What follows is a careful sequence. The friends agree on the facts: same event, same hours, two rates. Gia consents to Jordy knowing her rate and withholds consent to posting her statement. Jordy chooses to ask Dana, the supervisor, how rates are set before posting anything, and keeps the decision about what to do next. Asked whether the gap is discrimination, Gia says she does not know. Maybe shift lead pays more. The first step is to ask what it covers.

Your role is to line up both shifts side by side before Jordy writes to Dana.

- ❓ **Stop and think.** How does the choice of comparator change the answer in both the soccer case and Jordy’s?

Constructing a fair comparison

The new skill is comparing two cases on the same terms before drawing a conclusion. It extends Case 5's line-by-line reading. Jordy's statement shows 8.0 hours at \$16.50, or \$132.00 in **gross pay**, the money earned before any taxes or other deductions are taken out.

In employment law, the person you compare yourself to is often called a comparator, and the choice of comparator shapes the result. Here the natural comparator is Gia, but the comparison only holds if the jobs are defined. **Compensation** is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime. The evidence establishes identical hours and shared tasks. It also shows one technical task for Jordy and one title with modest added tasks for Gia. It leaves open what the title formally requires and how the employer sets rates. Legitimate explanations such as duties, title and experience are plausible. So is error. The documents cannot distinguish among them.

Case 10's skill, reporting to the office responsible, determines the next move. Dana sets rates, so Dana is asked. A strong message states the observation, lists the verified facts and asks one precise question about what shift lead includes and how rates are determined. It does not rely on Gia's statement, which respects her boundary and keeps the question about Jordy's pay.

 **Stop and think.** Which legitimate explanations for the \$1.50 are plausible, and what evidence would test each?

Law, litigation and professional standards

Federal law constrains pay-setting. The **Equal Pay Act** is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work. **Title VII** is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The EEOC enforces both and describes retaliation protections (EEOC, no date listed). Separately, the NLRB explains that most private-sector employees may discuss wages with coworkers, with or without a union (NLRB, no date listed). A right to discuss one's own pay is not a license to publish a colleague's records.

The women's national soccer team litigation illustrates the comparator problem at scale. In 2020, a federal judge dismissed the equal pay claim, emphasizing structural differences between the men's and women's contracts (NPR, May 2, 2020). The players appealed, arguing that rates of pay were the relevant comparison. The 2022 settlement, \$24 million with a commitment to equal pay rates, resolved the dispute without a finding (NPR, February 22, 2022). The terms were later formalized in signed agreements (PBS NewsHour, September 6, 2022).

Broader trends frame the stakes. Pew reports that the gender pay gap has narrowed only slightly over two decades and is smaller for workers ages 25 to 34 (Pew Research Center, March 4, 2025). Salary transparency laws that require posted ranges may make comparisons easier to start (NPR, January 3, 2023).

Law, litigation and professional standards, continued

Professional codes describe the employer's side of the conversation Jordy is starting. SHRM members commit to "take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information about HR policies and practices" (SHRM Code of Ethics, April 24, 2023). IABC members pledge, "I protect confidential information while acting within the law" (IABC Code of Ethics, no date listed). Dana's answer should meet the first standard, and Jordy's message already meets the second.

 **Stop and think.** How should a worker balance the right to discuss pay with a coworker's wish to keep records private?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) | No date listed
Pay Discrimination

Real source | National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) | No date listed
Your Right to Discuss Wages

Real source | NPR | May 2, 2020
Federal Judge Dismisses U.S. Women's Soccer Team's Equal Pay Claim

Real source | NPR | February 22, 2022
The U.S. national women's soccer team wins \$24 million in equal pay settlement

Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | September 6, 2022
U.S. men's and women's soccer teams formally sign equal pay agreements

Real source | Pew Research Center | March 4, 2025
Gender pay gap in U.S. has narrowed slightly over 2 decades

Real source | NPR | January 3, 2023
The impact that new salary transparency laws could have

Real source | Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) | 2023
SHRM Code of Ethics

Real source | International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) | No date listed
IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Pay statement

Jordy’s pay statement

Event crew, Saturday. Hours: 8.0 at \$16.50. Gross pay for the event: \$132.00.

Look closely: Multiply the hours by the rate. Does it match the gross pay?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Work schedule

The crew schedule

Saturday event, 3:00—11:00 p.m. Crew: Gia (shift lead), Jordy and two other crew members. Setup, 3:00—5:00: all crew. Caption and audio check: Jordy. Closing, 10:00—11:00: all crew.

Look closely: Circle “shift lead.” Does the schedule say what that job includes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Text messages

Jordy and Gia compare notes

Sunday, 1:15 p.m.

Gia: I'm fine with you knowing my rate. I just don't want my statement posted anywhere.

Jordy: Got it. Did you do anything different as shift lead?

Gia: I opened up and handled one guest issue. Honestly, I don't know if that's why. Let's ask Dana.

Look closely: What does Gia agree to share, and what does she ask Jordy not to do?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: equal pay

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Before you can say why Jordy is paid less, you need to know what each job included. **Compensation** is all the pay and benefits a worker receives, including hourly rates, bonuses and overtime. A job title, extra duties or more experience can explain a pay difference. So can a mistake. The pay statements show the rates, but they do not show how the rates were set.

Federal laws limit the reasons an employer can use to set pay. The **Equal Pay Act** is a federal law from 1963 that requires equal pay for men and women who do equal work. **Title VII** is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It bans job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Both laws apply to covered employers, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces them. A legitimate reason, such as different job duties, can lawfully explain a pay difference.

Talking about pay is protected too. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) says most private-sector workers have a right to discuss pay with coworkers. That right holds with or without a union. It does not make Gia's pay statement Jordy's to share. Jordy can ask Dana how rates are set without naming Gia's rate.

Professional standards

Real source | Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

SHRM Code of Ethics: Fairness and Justice

"Develop, administer, and advocate policies and procedures that foster fair, consistent and equitable treatment for all."

In plain words: HR professionals who belong to SHRM agree to use workplace policies that treat workers fairly and consistently.

Question: The schedule lists Gia as shift lead. What written policy would show whether that title explains the higher rate?

Your answer

A policy that answers this would state _____. Without it, _____.

A real 'same work, different pay' dispute that ended in a settlement and a promise of equal rates.



Why the claim was first dismissed: the judge compared how the contracts were structured. What you compare shapes the answer.

[illegible]

Sort the evidence

On your own Line up the accounts in the diagram. Then name one view that is missing. About 6 minutes.

Line up the accounts. Where do they agree, where do they differ, and which difference could be a legitimate factor? What would you need to find out before calling it unfair?

Account 1
Jordy’s record: 8 hours, setup, caption and audio check, closing, \$16.50

Account 2
Gia’s account: same hours, setup and closing, opened up and handled one guest issue, \$18.00

Account 3
The schedule: Gia listed as shift lead, with no description of the role

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Ask the supervisor how rates are set and what the shift-lead role requires

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Jordy should do first and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

Jordy's statement shows \$16.50 an hour. Gia's shows \$18.00 for the same Saturday event, and the schedule lists her as "shift lead." What should Jordy do first?

- ☐ **A** Tell the rest of the crew that Gia is paid more for the same work.
- ☐ **B** Compare what each of them did, find out what "shift lead" means and ask Dana how rates are set.
- ☐ **C** Let it go, because an employer can set any pay rate it chooses.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi, I found out Gia makes more than me and we did the exact same work so ① this is discrimination. I know it's because of who I am. I want the same rate as her starting now or I'm going to post about it everywhere so people know how this company treats workers. ② I have her pay stub as proof. I've worked here longer than some people and I always show up on time. Let me know by tomorrow. Jordy

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 10 minutes.

Write Jordy's message to the supervisor and a one-page plan for the conversation. The plan lists the record Jordy brings, what Gia agreed to share, the questions to ask and Jordy's options after each kind of answer.

Use: Case documents: Jordy's pay statement, the crew schedule with job titles, Jordy and Gia's conversation and Jordy's statement. Real sources: the EEOC's Youth@Work page on pay discrimination and the NLRB page on the right to discuss wages.

You'll make: Message, 80–120 words, plus a one-page conversation plan

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Fill in the record sheet from Evidence A and B: date, hours, duties, title and rate.
- 2 Mark what Gia agreed to share in Evidence C, and with whom.
- 3 Write Jordy's message to Dana, 80 to 120 words, on the Your draft page.
- 4 Write the conversation plan: Jordy's next step after each kind of answer.
- 5 Note that formal complaints have deadlines. Say when Jordy should ask a qualified adviser.
- 6 Check your work with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Record sheet: date, hours, duties, title, rate

What Gia agreed to share

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your record match the documents exactly?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your message use Gia’s rate only as she agreed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it ask what shift lead includes and how rates are set, without claiming discrimination?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your plan separate a satisfying answer, a need for more facts and a possible legal issue?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Relies on assumption.	☐ Mentions the gap only.	☐ Cites duties, hours and rate.	☐ Cites records and acknowledges what isn’t known.
Reasoning	☐ Declares discrimination.	☐ Assumes the reason.	☐ Asks for criteria before concluding.	☐ Identifies possible legitimate factors to test.
Audience & purpose	☐ Threatens or exposes coworkers.	☐ Polite but vague.	☐ Specific question to the right person.	☐ Specific question that protects coworkers’ privacy.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Replaces conclusion with a question.	☐ Explains how changes protect Jordy and get an answer.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 10 minutes.

- 1** What information could explain the \$1.50 difference, and what might challenge that explanation?

- 2** Whose choice is it to make Jordy's pay public, and why?

- 3** What answer from Dana would satisfy Jordy, and what answer would not?

- 4** In the soccer case, the judge looked at contract structures, and the players wanted him to compare rates of pay. Why does that choice matter?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 11: Why are Jordy and Gia paid different rates?

In this case, two friends who worked the same event find out one is paid \$1.50 more an hour. Your student compared their records and wrote a respectful message asking a supervisor how pay rates are set.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What questions could someone ask about pay when starting a new job?
- 2 Why might a person want to keep their pay private?
- 3 What makes a question to a boss sound respectful?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.