

Asking for and taking holiday

Employers and workers should communicate early and clearly about taking holiday. This can help keep a positive working relationship.

When to ask for holiday

Workers should ask for their holiday dates as far in advance as possible. This is so the employer can make any arrangements needed.

By law, workers must ask for holiday at least twice the number of days before as the amount they want to take off.

For example, if a worker wants 10 days off they'll need to ask at least 20 days before the time off starts.

This is unless the worker's employment contract includes a 'relevant agreement' about giving notice for holiday. This might say they need to give more or less notice.

When to take holiday by

An employer can set a fixed start and end date for when workers should take their holiday entitlement in each year. This is called the 'leave year'.

If an employer has set a leave year, they should:

- tell workers
- write it in the contract terms or another agreement document

For example, an employer might set the leave year to start and end alongside the financial year – 1 April to 31 March each year.

If an employer has not set a leave year, it begins from the day the worker started working for the organisation.

Workers should take their statutory 5.6 weeks' holiday entitlement during the leave year.

In some circumstances, workers can carry over their holiday into the next leave year. Find out more about [carrying over holiday](#).

Refusing or cancelling holiday

An employer can refuse or cancel holiday. They must let the worker know beforehand by at least the same amount of time as the amount they requested.

For example, a worker asks their employer for 7 days off. The employer later realises they'll be too short-staffed that week so they need the worker to work. The employer must tell the worker they need to cancel the time off at least 7 days before it was due to start.

An employer should have a good business reason to refuse or cancel a holiday request.

They should consider that refusing or cancelling holiday could affect their relationship with workers. It could have a particularly negative effect if the worker has already booked and paid for a holiday.

An employer cannot refuse to let workers take any holiday at all. By law, an employer must make sure workers can take the amount of holiday they're entitled to during the year.

Making workers take holiday

An employer can make workers take:

- holiday days when it suits the employer, for example if the organisation shuts down over [Christmas](#)
- unpaid leave at times, if it's agreed in the contract

If an employer wants workers to take holiday on certain dates, they must give them advance notice. By law, the employer must tell workers at least twice as many calendar days before as the number of days they want the workers to take.

For example, an employer wants workers to take 5 days of holiday while they're closed over Christmas. They must tell workers this at least 10 days before the holiday starts.

This is unless the worker's employment contract includes a 'relevant agreement' about giving notice for holiday. This might say their employer needs to give more or less notice.

Holiday when starting a job

Workers start to 'accrue' (build up) holiday entitlement as soon as they start a job.

By law, in the first year of a job an employer can use an 'accrual system'. This is where holiday is calculated as you go along.

For example, a worker builds up one twelfth of their holiday each month. By the start of the third month, they can take a quarter of their holiday.

Employers could allow workers to use holiday throughout the first year before they have accrued it.

After their first year, workers could use their full statutory holiday entitlement from the start of their leave year.

Workers will need to give the right notice when requesting holiday.

Employers should follow their organisation's policy when considering requests. They should have a good business reason to refuse a holiday request.

Holiday when leaving a job

During their notice period, a worker might be able to take any holiday they have accrued.

This will depend on whether:

- they can give the right amount of notice to ask for holiday
- their employer lets them take the holiday

Alternatively, the employer might ask the worker to take the holiday before they leave.

How much holiday a worker has depends on how far through the leave year they end the job.

If a worker has any holiday entitlement left when they leave, their employer must add this holiday pay to their final pay. This is sometimes called 'payment in lieu' of taking holiday.

A worker might have taken more holiday than their entitlement by the time their job ends. In this situation, the employer can take money from their final pay. This must be agreed beforehand in writing. This is sometimes known as a 'payback clause'.

[Find out more about holidays and final pay](#)

Managing holiday

To manage holiday effectively, employers should:

- communicate clearly and early with workers about any rules or restrictions on holiday
- follow their organisation's policy
- be open, fair and consistent

If an employer does not manage holiday effectively, they could risk:

- causing work-related stress for their workers
- creating an unhealthy work environment
- facing legal claims – employers have a legal responsibility to make sure workers can take the holiday they're entitled to

Unpaid leave

A worker can ask their employer for unpaid leave if:

- they have run out of holiday
- they do not want to use their holiday entitlement

It's up to their employer whether to agree to it. The worker can explain the reason for their request. The worker and employer should try to come to an agreement together.

Workers should check their contract to see if it covers unpaid leave and how to request it.

If there's a problem with taking holiday

If a worker has a problem with taking holiday, it's a good idea to raise this informally first. They can do this by [talking to their employer](#).

The employer should take the worker seriously, and take steps to [deal with the problem](#).

If raising it informally does not resolve the problem, the worker can [raise a grievance](#). This is where they make a formal complaint to their employer.

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about holiday entitlement, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).