

Phased returns

A phased return to work is when someone who's been absent gradually builds up to returning to work. For example:

- starting on reduced hours
- doing work that is different to their usual job
- having a lighter workload

A phased return to work might be appropriate after a:

- long-term illness
- serious injury
- bereavement

For example, Bo works on a farm and has been off work with a leg injury. Bo agrees with their employer to return but only operate certain machinery and take regular rest breaks.

If an employee is disabled, their employer must also make [reasonable adjustments](#) to support them.

How long a phased return should be

How long a phased return will last depends on the employee's individual circumstances. The employer and the employee should agree how long it will be for.

If an employee has a [fit note](#), this will usually give advice on how long their phased return should be. However, the employer and their employee should still discuss and agree this together.

The employer and employee should regularly review how the phased return is going.

The employer should be flexible and make sure they're supporting their employee's health and wellbeing. For example, they might need to:

- extend the phased return to work
- agree to new changes to the employee's responsibilities or work pattern

Pay during a phased return

An employee's pay will depend on what kind of phased return to work they have agreed with their employer.

If the employee returns to their usual work on reduced hours

If the employee returns to their usual work but on reduced hours, they should get their usual rate of pay for the hours they work.

For the time they're not able to work, an employee's pay will depend on whether:

- they've agreed anything with their employer
- their employer has a policy that covers this

They might get:

- full pay if the employer has agreed to it or it's written in the organisation's policy
- company sick pay, if their employer offers this
- [statutory sick pay \(SSP\)](#), if they're eligible – this is only if the employer does not offer full pay or company sick pay

If the employee has a lighter workload

If the employee has a lighter workload, it's up to the employer and employee to agree on a rate of pay. The employer should put this agreement in writing, for example in a letter or email.

Contact the Acas helpline

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