

Out of Office message tips and examples

Taking off on annual leave or travelling for work for a few days? An Out of Office (OOO) message is essential to let clients, suppliers and colleagues know you're not at your desk or actively at work.

If you've ever tried writing an Out of Office message, you know it can be harder than it sounds. Should you be funny, professional or straight-to-the-point? What about setting internal and external messages? There are so many ways to write an auto-reply, it can be difficult to know what's right.

This guide to crafting the perfect auto-reply will help you navigate the nuance. You'll find everything from the best practices of when and how to set up your out-of-office response, right through to templates you can edit and use next time you're on leave. Whatever reason you're away from your desk, you have everything you need.

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Out of Office email basics

What is an Out Of Office email?

An Out of Office email (or 'away' message) is an automated email you can turn on for a specific time frame, that alerts anyone who emails you that you are unavailable. You will typically have the option to set up an internal and an external Out of Office message – one for colleagues and one for people outside your company.

When to set an Out of Office email

When is an Out of Office message appropriate? Whenever you expect to be away from your emails longer than usual and won't be able to get to them by the end of the day. If you're not sure about the standard for your workplace, ask your manager or [HR representative](#). Many workplaces have policies on when Out of Office messages are to be set – such as for public holidays, personal leave and other absences – and what you should include in them. It's best to check yours before you set your auto-reply.

What makes a good Out of Office email?

A good Out of Office message gets straight to the point and gives the reader all the information they need in just a few sentences. Some people like to keep them informative and direct, while others like to inject more personality and humour. You'll find examples of both in this guide, to give you an idea of how you might like to create your own.

5 tips for crafting the best Out of Office message

The best Out of Office messages are clear, concise and professional, but still include that personal touch. These tips for crafting the best Out of Office email will help you know what to include and what to leave out, to strike the right balance.

1. Clarity – keep it clear

A clear and simple Out of Office message is always best. Get to the point and use clear, jargon-free language to ensure the reader gets all the info they need from you. To keep your email simple, stick to the facts: when you start your leave, when you expect to be back, who people can contact if their matter is urgent and when you'll be responding to emails.

2. Conciseness – keep it short

It's important that your Out of Office message is organised and easy to understand, especially for those seeking urgent help. But sometimes keeping your email short and sweet is easier said than done – you might have multiple points of contact or lots of information people need to know. If so, consider using bullet points to organise your

email and make it easy to scan. Not sure what to cover? If it's not essential information, leave it out altogether.

3. Professionalism – keep it friendly

Even if you're clocking off for a little while, a professional Out of Office message will help you make a good impression while you're away. It's important to remember that you don't know who'll be emailing you while you're gone, so be sure to create a message you're comfortable with anyone receiving.

An easy way to keep your out-of-office notification professional is to avoid informal language, slang and emojis. You should use proper spelling and grammar, and [give your email a double-check and proofread](#) before you hit the schedule button. It's also essential to let the person or team you're referring to know how long you'll be on leave, so they can handle the tasks as you need them to.

4. Personalisation – keep it human

A professional email doesn't have to read like a robot wrote it. As with any email, it should show appreciation for those reaching out, using a friendly tone. If possible, use a feature to address the recipient by name, which may or may not be an option depending on your email platform. It's also helpful to add a contact person or team for the sender, in case they're looking for assistance before you return.

5. Humour – keep it light

Professional emails can sometimes feel a little abrupt, so humour can help prevent your 'out of office' from sounding like a [rude email](#). If you do want to add some humour to your out of office message, remember to use it sparingly and always keep it appropriate for the workplace. It's best to avoid sarcasm, as it is too easily misunderstood. But a light pun or quip in your email is a great way to inject some personality and warmth.

Examples of an Out of Office Message for different situations

If you still feel stumped on what to write in your away message, these Out of Office templates may give you some ideas. Remember to personalise the email template, include any specifics, use your own tone of voice and add a touch of humour, if you like.

Setting an OOO email for annual leave

Going on [annual leave](#) can mean you're out of the office a few days, weeks or even months, so an Out of Office message is vital. Your annual leave message should be short and sweet, so people can quickly see when you'll return and who can help them in your absence. This annual leave email template should help you get started with your own message.

Annual leave Out of Office template

Hi there,

I have some good news and bad news, the bad being I'm currently on annual leave from [Leave-Date] to [Return-Date] and won't have access to my email during this time.

The good news is, [Colleague-Name] is available to help with anything you may need. You can reach them on [Phone-Number] or [Email-Address]. Otherwise, I will get back to you on my return.

Regards,

[Your-Name]

Setting an OOO email for business travel

When you travel for work, you may have limited or no access to your emails. It's the right thing to let people know you could be delayed in getting back to them, even if you're still checking your emails daily. This sample Out of Office message for when you're travelling can be edited to suit how much access you'll have to your emails, to keep everyone in the loop.

Business travel Out of Office message example

Hi,

I'm currently out of the office on a business trip and will have limited access to my emails between [Leave-Date] and [Return-Date].

While I'll get back to you on my return, [Colleague-Name] can help with anything you may need in the meantime. You can contact them on [Phone-Number] or [Email-Address].

Kind regards,

[Your-Name]

Setting an OOO email for medical leave

Being on medical leave can be a tough time, especially if you're not entirely sure when you'll return to work. Writing a reassuring and informative yet brief Out of Office message will help keep your area of the business running while you're unable to attend to your emails. Keep this automatic replies template handy – if you ever need to take medical leave, you'll be ready.

Medical leave Out of Office automatic reply example

Hello,

Thank you for your email. Please note that I am currently on medical leave from [Date] and will not have access to my email.

While I expect to return by [Date], [Colleague-Name] is happy to help you with anything you may need until then. They are available on [Phone] or [Email].

Thanks again,

[Your-Name]

Setting an OOO email for a family emergency

Hopefully you'll never have a family emergency significant enough to take you away

from work – still, it doesn't hurt to have an Out of Office email bookmarked and ready to go.

You don't need to go into specifics as to why you're out of office, but you should sound sincere in wanting to help people, and direct them to contacts who can help them until your return. Using the below example of Out of Office messages for family emergencies will help you tread that fine line between professional and personal, while giving people all the info they need.

Family emergency Out of Office email example

Hi there,

Due to a family emergency, I will be out of office and away from my emails from [Date], expecting to return on [Date].

I'll get back to you as soon as I can on my return, but until then, please contact [Colleague-Name] on [Phone] or [Email] if you need help.

Speak soon,

[Your-Name]

Best practices for setting up an Out of Office reply

Setting up an auto-reply message while you're off work can help you stay organised and look professional to both your colleagues and clients. There are some best practices you can use to create the best Out of Office email – one that does the job while you're not on the job.

Set it up in advance

Whether you'll be out of the office for medical reasons, a family emergency or on holiday, there is a chance you may forget to turn on your Out of Office reply. Scheduling your Out of Office message as soon as you know when you'll be unavailable will ensure you don't forget to turn it on – or off, for that matter.

Include exact dates, if you can

Some leave might be unexpected and you may not know when you'll return. At the very least, always include the date you went on leave and when you expect to return. If you do know your exact dates, even better! Some people also like to extend their message timeframe to include the day before and after their return, to be as prepared and organised as possible. Doing this will give you some buffer time to catch up on your emails when you get back.

Provide alternative contact information

If you're out of the office on leave, you probably don't want people trying to contact you about work things on your personal phone number or email address. Adding contacts for colleagues to your auto-reply will not only help establish this boundary, but also keep things running as smoothly as possible while you're away.

Did you know you can set your out-of-office reply to provide different responses, depending on who reached out to you? You can set one more casual message for colleagues and another, more professional auto-reply for external emails (to clients, suppliers and the like). You would still want to include who can help, when you'll be back and when they can expect a reply.

Avoid sharing sensitive information

Oversharing with clients and even with your colleagues can come across as unprofessional, particularly if it's a sensitive matter. Remember that there is absolutely no pressure to do so. Keep your Out of Office email to the point, giving people only the information they need to know – and keep it at that. As long as they know who to contact if they need help and when they can expect a response from you, your out-of-office reply has done its job.

Whatever's keeping you from your emails, having Out of Office templates ready to go means you can leave your work at work, without any worry. Writing an Out of Office email that's informative, concise and professional – maybe with a hint of humour – will help you appear as polished as you do in your day-to-day role (and [looking good to your employer too](#)).

The best Out of Office message keeps everyone informed, so you can take time away from the office without the distraction of your work emails. And that's what it's all about!

FAQs

What should I write on my out of Office?

An Out of Office message should include how long you'll be unavailable, who to contact for an urgent matter and when people can expect to hear back from you. It's important to address both internal (other staff members) and external (customers or clients) Out of Office emails, to ensure you cover all scenarios and give people guidance on what to do if they need help with something you would normally do.

How long should my Out of Office message be?

An out-of-office email should be short and to the point – no longer than three sentences. Your Out of Office message should be just long enough to give the reader all the information they need: when you'll be gone, when you'll be back and who to speak to if they need help. Any non-essential information can be left out.

Should I use humour in my Out of Office message?

Adding a little humour to an Out of Office message can be good, if used appropriately and if it's okay with the business you work for. For example, you may say "The bad news is: I'm out of the office. The good news is: I'm out of the office!"

If you do use humour, it's best to keep it to a minimum, so as not to distract from the information people need most from your email, i.e., how long you'll be gone and when you'll be back. Sarcasm is best left out of your auto replies as it can sometimes be misunderstood.

Can I include my personal social media handles in my Out of Office message?

In most situations, you should not include your personal social media handles in your Out of Office message. For starters, if you're out of the office, you're typically not working, so being contacted about work would not be ideal! It may also be against [your company's values](#) and social media policy.

However, if there are urgent matters only you can help with (such as client enquiries in a [sales role](#)) and it's within your business's policies, you can include your personal social media handles, email address and/or contact number. If you do include this information, mention how often you'll be checking these contact options so people know when to expect a response.

How far in advance should I set up my Out of Office message?

At the latest, you should set up your Out of Office message to start at the end of your last day in the office, to be turned off when you return. Most email programs allow you to pre-schedule this task – a great option if you're worried you'll forget. But you can also have your auto-reply switched on earlier, to let people know ahead of time you'll be out of the office in case they need to speak with you about anything before you leave. Pro-tip: to help you stay organised, consider turning your auto-responder off a day after your return. This will give you time to get back to everyone who emailed while you were gone, catch up on work and be ready to tackle anything that comes your way. If you do plan to do this, be sure to add an extra day onto your out-of-office email to let people know when you'll be available again.