

How to negotiate flexible working hours

'The lead up to Christmas can be a busy time when additional work, [meetings](#), activities and events pop up unexpectedly. It's also a time when it's important that work is flexible, and we find ourselves thinking about [work/life balance](#).

However, work/life balance should really be a year-round consideration. Whether you have responsibilities as a carer, a disability or injury, [study commitments](#), kids, or another job, it's important to nurture all aspects of your life and avoid the burn-out that many experience this time of year.

So how do you ask for flexible working hours? We've got four tips to having an effective and transparent conversation with your manager, negotiating the flexible hours you need, and maintaining loyalty to your workplace and team.

1. **Be confident in your reasons.** One of the biggest obstacles to achieving a [work/life balance](#) is asking for it. Traditionally, requesting fewer hours at work would be perceived as having a lack of commitment to your job. But now, companies of all sizes across all industries are supporting their employees in balancing all aspects of their lives, having seen how this can lead to a more productive and fulfilling work environment for everyone. Having confidence in your reasons is a great starting point. If you believe you deserve it, then there's more of a chance your manager will too.
2. **Put it down on paper.** Jemima Grieve, Human Resources Manager at SEEK, advises that employees discuss the purpose of their request and the detail around it with a manager, including the anticipated duration and any flexibility there may be. "The request should ideally be made in writing so that the details are very clear, given that the manager may need time to work out if it's possible, and if so, how resourcing requirements will be met." It can also be helpful to discuss what you've written down with your manager in person to create a more fluid, honest conversation from the start.
3. **Show your commitment to the business.** "It's important to always remember

that business requirements need to be considered, so we encourage you to think about how the request will work practically before the conversation or request in writing is made,” says Grieve. For example, having some ideas about how a full-time workload will be managed across four days demonstrates a commitment to the business and the role, and also shows support to the manager who will then be doing their best to find a workable solution.

4. **Discuss the projected work arrangement.** Be clear about what you are requesting, so you can propose a specific work arrangement to your manager. Work/life balance means different things to do different people, so if you’re going to work less hours, you need to be realistic about what you can achieve in that time. If you’re squeezing in five or six days of work into an agreed four days, it’s likely you won’t be happy with the outcome.

Grieve says, “Remember, both manager and employee should approach the discussion with an open mind, and an approach of ‘if not, why not,’ rather than assuming it won’t work because it hasn’t been done before.” Create your case and present it sooner rather than later, not just when the going gets tough. Putting a balanced work schedule in place will alleviate unnecessary stress and create a more manageable lifestyle, which benefits both employees and employers.