

# Ask Sabina: How to re-enter the workforce after raising children

**Dear Sabina,**

**How do you get an employer to give you a chance to return to the workforce after being at home for a number of years raising children? Tracey**

Hi Tracey,

Planning a return to work can be daunting no matter what age your children are, or how long you've been away from the paid workforce. It's normal to experience some uncertainty and self-doubt, or even wonder if your working brain has been mashed with all the pureed veggies and Wiggles you've been serving up.

So, the first step is to get clear in your own mind about the career break you've been on, and your readiness to re-join the paid workforce. As obvious as it may seem, don't overlook the importance of discussing your return-to-work plans with your partner, children (in age appropriate ways), and others in your inner circle. Identifying adequate practical and emotional support, encouragement and acceptance from others will positively impact how you approach this next step and help to minimise any unhelpful feelings of guilt or fear. Now is a good time to remind yourself of other challenging life transitions you've successfully navigated—including having a child! Know that with the right support, preparation and mindset, you have the capacity to make this leap too.

Next, take time to define the kind of job you're seeking and what factors matter most to you in your future working life. Bear in mind the goal posts may have changed since before children and that's OK. You might want to ask yourself:

- Are you looking to return to an industry you once worked in or hoping to kick off a whole new career?
- Are you seeking full-time or part-time work?
- Do you prefer set hours or need flexibility?

- Are you open to additional training or upskilling in order to fill any potential gaps that have arisen since you left work?
- Is money your primary driver or perhaps reigniting your brain power, finding meaning outside the home, or spending time in the company of others what's calling you back to work?

Defining your ideal role and the key reasons for your return to work will help give you clarity, confidence, assist in honing your resume, and help you identify appropriate opportunities.

Speaking of which, many parents returning to work feel unsure about how best to explain the time away from work on their resume. Take pride in the time you've spent with your children and park the judgement, regardless of the personal choices made around navigating the work/parent juggle. Avoid apologising or hiding details of the time you've dedicated to child-raising and instead highlight your readiness to return to work, and the skillset, experience and qualifications you bring.

Then do your industry homework. Find out what jobs are going in the areas you're interested in, speak to old colleagues and network with new people. Every conversation or coffee catch-up you have can generate more conversations and opportunities. Take the time to [update your resume](#) and create or edit your SEEK Profile. Follow industry leaders and mentors on social networks and brush up on what's happening now in your desired field.

Finally, don't forget your transferable skills as a parent have plenty of value in the paid workforce. If parents had a job description listed on SEEK, it would probably read something like this: Challenging, long-term role requiring excellent communication, project management and organisational skills. Must be prepared to thrive in a fast-paced and often chaotic environment, but also be flexible and on-call 24/7. Expect plenty of pushback and complaining from key stakeholders and assume you will not be liked by your direct reports or colleagues all the time. Previous experience as a tutor, nurse, storyteller, mediator, cook, driver, accountant, counsellor, vet, photographer and soft place to fall will be highly regarded.

When you believe you have a valuable contribution to make, others are more likely to see that too. It's also worth remembering that working parents make up a sizeable portion of the workforce. Many employers recognise that a future employee who is a parent armed with the appropriate skills, experience and a can-do attitude can make the leap back to work and be an asset to any organisation or team. Just check you're

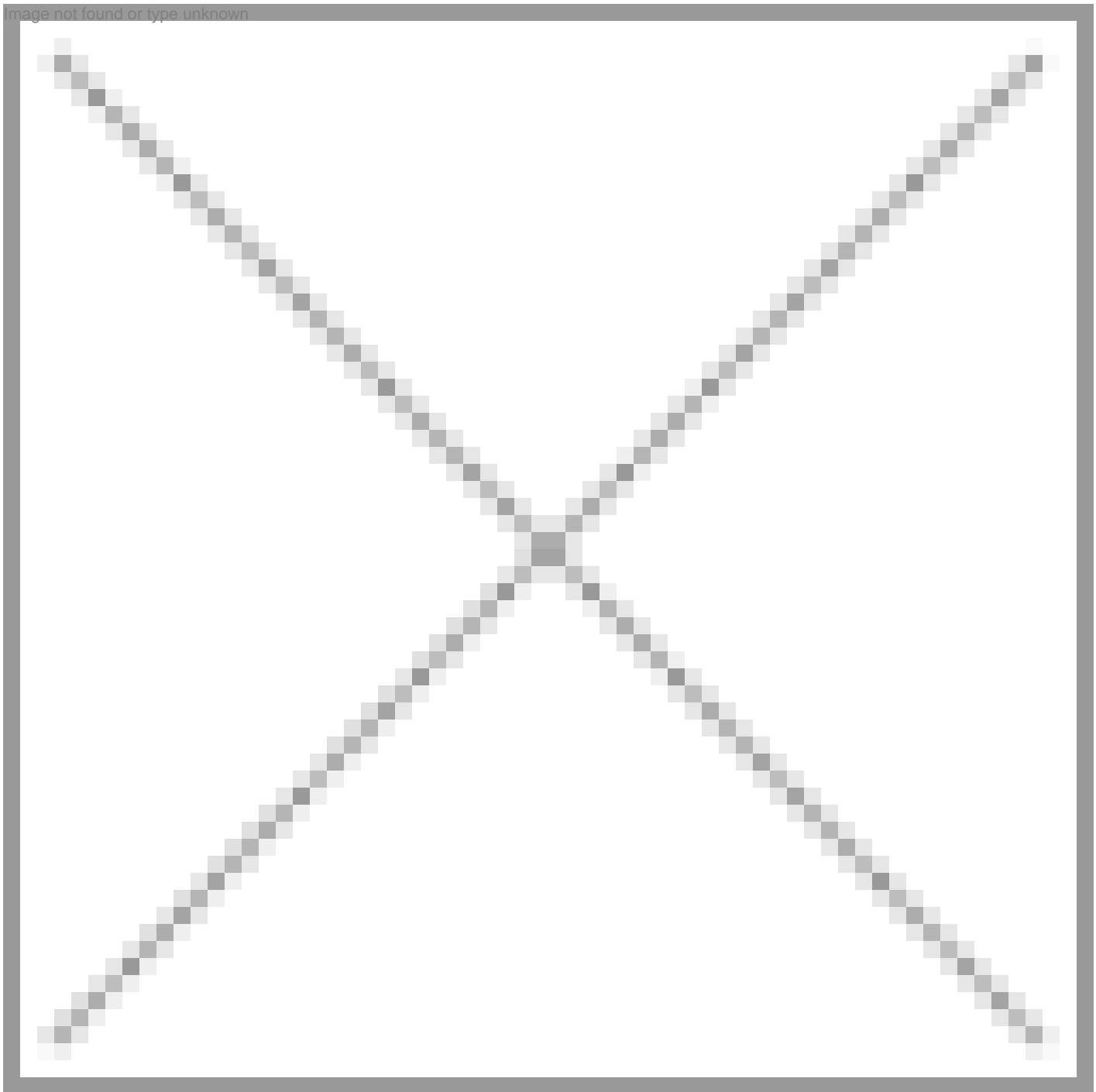
not accessorising your new working wardrobe with smears of Vegemite or pieces of lost Lego before you head off to your next interview!

**Have you got a question for Sabina that you'd like featured? Submit it to [asksabina@seek.com.au](mailto:asksabina@seek.com.au)**

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