

How to resign the right way

Getting ready to resign from a role? Like any big move it can bring up questions – who do you tell first, and how? Do you need to [write a letter](#)? What happens next?

Whatever your reason for leaving, the way you resign can make a real difference to your career down the track.

Here's what you need to do to resign well, so you can leave on a positive note and take your next step.

Why is resigning well so important?

“Resigning from a job and leaving an organisation on good terms is incredibly important in terms of building credibility through your career,” says Jon Hottot, Partner Davidson Executive & Boards.

“You might need that organisation to be a [reference](#) for you in the future, and you never know who else they might speak to in the broader market.

“If you leave on a good note, six months down the track people would say you did a great job, you left on the right terms, and if you want to come back they would hire you tomorrow.”

Do I have to resign in person?

First things first: you should tell your manager in person. If that's not possible because you're based in different locations, then you could opt for a phone call.

It's best to avoid email in any case – even if your manager is on retreat at a remote mountain with no phone access.

There should be someone else acting in their role who you can resign to face-to-face or

by phone, says Elissa Henderson, Senior Business Partner Workplace Experience at Davidson.

What should I say to my manager?

Set up a meeting with your manager, but be ready to tell them why you're resigning on the spot. There's a good chance they already suspect what you're about to do, says Hottot.

It's best to keep your conversation around the facts, Hottot says. You might say something like: "I've been offered an opportunity that's more in line with my career aspirations."

Avoid airing grievances in your meeting and instead take the opportunity to briefly acknowledge what you've gained from the role. "The perfect resignation is to show gratitude and appreciation for the time your manager has shown to you, that you've enjoyed your role greatly, but the time has come for you to move into a different role," Hottot says.

Eliza Kirkby, Regional Director of Hays, says if there's likely to be a handover period to a colleague or new person, reassure your boss that you'll be helpful and cooperative.

Following your initial meeting, it's now time to draft your official resignation letter.

What should I write in the resignation letter?

A letter of resignation acts as a legal document stating the date you want your notice period to begin, Kirkby says.

"A [simple resignation letter](#) should include details of the person to whom it is addressed, the notice of termination of employment, when this is effective from and your signature," she explains. "You may want to add an extra sentence or two thanking your boss for the opportunities you've been given."

Henderson says: "I can't stress enough how important it is to leave on good terms. Keep it as light and as positive as possible."

To help you get started, [download our free resignation template](#).

How much notice do I have to give?

There's a straightforward answer to this question, Hottot says. "You have a contract and it will have a [notice period](#) on it." If you don't have a contract, [you are not legally obligated to provide notice to your employer](#).

"You may decide that you want to give more than that if you feel that it's doing the right thing by your current employer."

If you work in an industry with confidential information – such as research and development or client knowledge – and you're moving to a competitor, you may be walked straight out of the office.

You'll then need to serve your notice period off-site as "gardening leave". During that time, you can't start working anywhere else.

What do I do after I resign?

Even if you can't wait to leave your job, you need to serve your [notice period](#) – after all, you're still being paid to work there.

And the way you see out your last few weeks matters, so be sure to keep doing your job effectively and to the best of your ability, Henderson says.

"It's a time when you're creating lasting impressions on your manager, the industry, and your organisation," she says.

Don't become the person who hangs around the water cooler complaining to everyone about the company, Hottot says.

"Be the person who is positive," he says. "Say: 'I'm just going to a different organisation and a different role, and I've really enjoyed my time here'."

Your colleagues will be naturally curious about where you're going, so be ready for questions, Kirkby says.

"If you don't want to reveal where you're going, you're perfectly within your rights to keep this to yourself," she adds.

“Once you’ve handed in your notice, keep your resignation confidential – your boss will appreciate being the one to decide who else to tell and how and when to break the news.”

Can my resignation be effective immediately?

You might be able to resign immediately if you discuss that with your manager, but most employees will have a contract of employment that states a notice period.

“People are contractually obligated to adhere to that and it's usually only by mutual agreement that any notice period can be shortened,” Henderson says. The organisation might need you in the role for your notice period, she explains.

Can I shorten my notice period?

If you have annual leave accrued when you resign, you may be able to use that to reduce your leave period.

But if you choose to do that, you won't get paid out that annual leave at the end of your employment.

For example, if you have two weeks of annual leave accrued and a four-week resignation notice period, you can ask to sacrifice your two weeks of your paid annual leave to [reduce your notice period by two weeks](#).

Can I resign while I'm on annual leave?

Technically you can [resign](#) while on annual leave, Henderson says. But if you're aiming to resign on good terms, it's best to do it before you go on leave or once you return to work.

Hottot says: “Always look at it from the other person's point of view. If you were the manager, would you want that person to resign while they're on annual leave?”

“While there's nothing illegal about it, it's not a great look and comes across as a little bit weak.”

In rare cases, you might get a job offer while on annual leave, Henderson says.

“In that situation, I would still recommend attempting to set up a face-to-face meeting, or at the very least, a phone call.”

Once you're ready to move on from a job, following these steps to resigning well can help you leave on a positive note and create a smoother transition to whatever's next.