

Checking holiday entitlement

You have the right to paid holiday ('statutory annual leave') whether you work:

- full time
- part time
- under a zero-hours contract

The amount of days you get depends on:

- how many days or hours you work
- any extra agreements you have with your employer

You build up ('accrue') holiday from the day you start working, including when you're on:

- a probationary period
- sick leave
- maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave

Your employer can choose to give you more holiday than the statutory entitlement. Your contract's [written document](#) should say how much holiday you get.

1. Statutory annual leave

Full time

If you work full time for 5 (or more) days a week, you're entitled to at least 5.6 weeks' (28 days) paid holiday (statutory annual leave) a year.

Your 5.6 weeks' legal minimum holiday is usually made up of:

20 days = 4 weeks

+ 8 days (which can be the year's bank holidays) = 1.6 weeks

Your 5.6 weeks' statutory annual leave entitlement might include bank holidays, depending on your contract.

Part time

If you work part time, you're entitled to at least 5.6 weeks' paid holiday in proportion to the hours you worked ('pro rata').

You can work this out by the number of days you work a week x 5.6.

For example, if you work 3 days a week, you're entitled to 16.8 days' paid holiday (3 x 5.6) a year.

If your employer gives full-time employees more than the statutory annual leave (for example, 6 weeks), then part-time employees must get the same, calculated pro rata.

Irregular hours

You must still get 5.6 weeks' holiday as a minimum if you work irregular hours, such as:

- shifts
- term-time work
- zero-hours contracts

You're not usually entitled to paid holiday if you're self employed (run your own business), but it could depend if you've been employed on a contract. It's a good idea to check your [employment status](#) to see what your entitlement is.

Maternity leave

You still accrue holiday while on:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave
- shared parental leave

For example, if you take a year of maternity leave, you'll return with a whole year's accrued holiday. Your employer might let you take some of this before you go on leave.

If you're not sure how much holiday you should get

If you're still not sure what your holiday entitlement is, you can:

- talk with your manager, someone in HR or your employer
- check your employment contract's [written document](#)
- [get legal advice](#), for example from Citizens Advice or your trade union

You must be paid the same amount when you're on holiday as you're paid when you're at work – whatever your working pattern.

Your holiday pay calculation can be based on:

- days or hours worked per week
- casual or irregular hours
- annualised hours – where you work a certain number of hours across the year but have some flexibility around which hours
- compressed hours – working full-time hours over fewer days
- shifts

2. Fixed hours

If your working hours do not vary (part time or full time) your pay will be calculated using your usual pay rate.

Shift or rota work

If you work shifts (part time or full time) and have set hours and pay, your holiday pay should be the same as this set pay.

If you do not have fixed or regular hours or your pay is not always the same, your holiday should be calculated on the average number of hours you worked at your average hourly rate in the previous 12 weeks.

If any of the 12 weeks are completely unpaid (no pay at all), an earlier week should be used for calculating in its place. If you get a small amount of pay for the week it should still be included in the 12-week average.

No fixed hours

If you do casual work with no normal hours, for example on a zero-hours contract, your holiday pay will be based on the average pay you got over the previous 12 weeks.

These should be weeks in which you were paid. If you were not paid in one of those 12 weeks (because you did not work), the last paid week before that should be used to calculate your holiday pay.

Overtime, commission and bonus

If you regularly get paid overtime, commission or bonuses, your employer must include these payments in at least 4 weeks of your paid holiday.

Some employers might include overtime, commission and bonus payments in your full 5.6 weeks' paid holiday (statutory annual leave), but they do not have to. This is because judges in holiday pay cases use the EU Working Time Directive, which is 4 weeks' holiday. The UK Working Time Regulations is 5.6 weeks.

Rolled-up holiday pay

You must get paid for your holiday when you take it. If your employer is spreading your holiday pay over the year by adding an amount on top of your hourly rate, this is known as 'rolled-up' holiday pay and your employer should not do this.

Holiday that's less than 1 full day

If you have part of a day's holiday to take, for example a half day, your employer might:

- let you leave work early or come in late one day
- round it up to the nearest full day (it cannot be rounded down)

If you think your holiday pay should be different

If you think you're not getting as much paid holiday as you're entitled to or are not sure how it's being calculated, you should [talk with your employer](#).

You could also check your contract's [written document](#).

Remember, if you believe your holiday pay is incorrect, you have 3 months less 1 day from the date you received the last incorrect payment to take your claim to an [employment tribunal](#). So it's a good idea to talk to your employer as soon as possible.

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It's a good idea to ask for your holiday dates as far in advance as possible so that your employer can make arrangements.

You should ask for holiday at least twice the amount of time beforehand as the amount you want to take off, unless your contract's [written document](#) says otherwise.

For example, if you want 10 days off you'll need to ask at least 20 days before.

Your employer can:

- refuse holiday at certain times, for example during busy periods, but they cannot refuse to let you take any holiday at all
- make you take holiday at certain times, such as [Christmas or bank holidays](#)
- say how much holiday you can take at one time

3. If your employer says you cannot take holiday

An employer can refuse or cancel holiday, but they must let you know beforehand by at least the same amount of time as the amount you requested.

Example

You've asked your employer for 7 days off. They later realise they'll be too short-staffed that week so they need you to work. They must tell you they need to cancel your time off at least 7 days before it was due to start.

They should give good reason for refusing or cancelling holiday and might suggest other dates, so it's a good idea to [talk to your employer](#) about it.

If your employer makes you take days off

Your employer can make you take:

- your holiday days when they want, for example they might shut down over [Christmas](#)
- unpaid leave at times, if it's in your contract's [written document](#)

If your employer needs you to take your holiday on certain dates, they should tell you at least twice as many days before as the number of days they need you to take.

For example, your employer needs you to take 5 days of holiday while they're closed over Christmas. They should tell you this at least 10 days before the holiday starts.

When you should take your holiday by

Your employer will have a start and end date when you should take your holiday by – called the 'leave year'.

Your employer should tell you when your workplace's leave year runs from and to.

You must take most of your statutory leave during the leave year.

Carrying over holiday

You must take your legal minimum holiday during your leave year.

If you get more than the legal minimum 5.6 weeks, your contract's [written document](#) should say if you can carry over holiday and how much.

When you're not able to use your paid holiday, for example if you're on maternity leave, you must be allowed to carry it over to the next leave year. It's a good idea to arrange this with your employer as early as possible.

If you're on long-term sick leave

If you're on long-term sick leave, you can carry over a maximum of 4 weeks' paid holiday and it must be used within 18 months of the date it carried over from.

[Find out more about sick pay and holiday pay.](#)

If you cannot take all your holiday

If you cannot take your full paid holiday for any other reason and you're worried about losing it, [talk to your employer](#) and try to reach an agreement.

Holiday when starting a job

You start to build up ('accrue') holiday as soon as you start a job.

In the first year of a job your employer might use an 'accrual system' where holiday is calculated as you go along.

For example, you build up one twelfth of your holiday each month, so that by the start of the third month you can take a quarter of your holiday.

Holiday when leaving a job

You may be able to take any accrued paid holiday you have left during your notice period before leaving a job, or your employer might want you to.

How much you get depends on how far through the leave year you end the job.

If you have any accrued holiday left when you leave your job, your employer must add this holiday pay to your final pay ('payment in lieu').

If you've taken more holiday than your entitlement by the time your job ends, your employer can take money from your [final pay](#), if agreed beforehand in writing. This is sometimes known as a 'payback clause'.

Unpaid leave

If you have run out or do not want to use your paid holiday for some time off, you can ask your employer for unpaid leave.

It's up to your employer whether to agree or not, but you can explain the reason for your request and try to come to the best agreement together.

Unpaid leave and how you can request it might be set out in your contract's [written document](#).

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Your employer does not have to give you time off on a bank holiday or at Christmas if they're not included in your [holiday entitlement](#). This is the same whether you work full time or part time.

Your employer can also make you take your holiday on bank holidays or at Christmas. For example, the business might shut for these days.

Remember bank holidays might be included in your paid holiday entitlement – you can check in your contract's [written document](#).

See which days are [bank holidays on GOV.UK](#).

It's a good idea to arrange your holiday dates with your employer as early as possible.

4. If your employer changes when they open or close

Your employer has the right to make changes to when you take holiday if they need to.

For example, they can decide to shut over Christmas and force their employees to take their paid holiday, even if in previous years the business was open over Christmas.

If your employer needs you to take holiday, they should tell you at least twice as many days before as the amount of days they need you to take.

For example, if they need you to take 2 days of holiday, they should tell you at least 4 days before.

Before making a change to the way staff take holidays, your employer

might need to consider whether there has been [custom and practice](#).

If your employer is making significant, long-term changes, for example to the amount of holiday days or pay they give, they must follow the process for [changing a contract](#).

If you do not want to take a bank holiday

If a bank holiday falls on one of your normal working days and you do not want to take the day off, you could ask your employer if you can work the bank holiday and take another day off instead.

This is taking a day's holiday 'in lieu'. Your employer does not have to agree to this.

You can only get paid in lieu of bank holidays if they're part of untaken holiday entitlement when you leave your job.

If you work on a bank holiday, you must still get your full 5.6 weeks (pro rata if you're part time) of statutory annual leave as paid time off.

Bank holidays while on sick or maternity leave

If they're included in your holiday entitlement, you still build up paid days off for bank holidays while on:

- sick leave
- maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave

[Find out more about sick pay and holiday pay](#).

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You still build up (accrue) holiday while on sick leave.

See our [sick pay and holiday pay guide](#) for advice on:

- taking holiday while off sick
- if you get sick while on holiday
- accruing holiday while off sick