

Asking for and taking holiday

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.

For 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 end of the third month you can take a quarter of your holiday.

Holiday when leaving a job

You might be able to take what's left of your annual leave 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 there's any [statutory holiday](#) left that you've not taken by the time you leave, your employer must pay you for it ('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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