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GUIDE

Ready to Return?
Six Steps to Get Back
to the Office

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Six Steps to Get Back to the Office

After a sustained period of uncertainty, the end of lockdown is finally in sight. As countries reopen their borders, businesses are starting to reopen their doors to get the economy moving.

Following months of working from home, the transition may not be simple and many workers report feeling anxious about getting back to the office. Despite these concerns, the chance to reunite with co-workers will boost a sense of belonging, shared purpose, and motivation. While it's important to focus on the positive, how can you make the transition as easy as possible for yourself and others, while preserving your mental and physical health?

From checklists to essays, there's a lot of advice out there. Start with these 6 must-do steps: ▶

Read up on your rights

While employers may be relied on to maintain the hygiene of the workspace and enforce various government safety rules, individual workers still have a responsibility – to themselves and their colleagues – to take control of their own situation.

You need to understand how and why your wages will be affected; what you can be expected to do; and what recourse you have if you suspect your safety is being jeopardized.

Already, large disputes have occurred between employers and their workers; it is paramount that you are prepared for any such clash and understand what to expect.

Acquaint yourself with the post-pandemic workers' rights in your country and make sure you are confident enough to be forthright if you feel they are not being respected. ▶

Explain your needs

Employers must safeguard employees' health and do what they can to accommodate extra needs like childcare, caring roles and commuting difficulties.

While this is primarily your employer's responsibility, it is difficult for them to know what you require unless you are honest and forthright about it.

For some, this will feel unusual: you may fear being distrusted or looked down on for making demands. But the post-pandemic period is going to be tough for everyone; it's vital that you don't make it harder for yourself by being unduly reticent.

Not only will being open about your concerns ensure your own experience of returning to work is smoother, it will help your employers create a more accommodating atmosphere for the whole team. ▶

Talk to your co-workers

Returning to work will be difficult for everyone; employees need to stick together and look out for each other.

From suddenly sharing space again to navigating new social norms, it is vital every individual feels secure within the team and comfortable voicing opinions.

Rather than expecting a top-down approach, you need to take the initiative and reach out to as many of your co-workers as possible.

While the transition will be tough and the future is uncertain, the opportunity exists for the post-pandemic workforce to be a stronger, more caring community; it all starts with communication. ▶

Understand

health guidelines

As scientists' understanding of COVID-19 expands, new symptoms have been noted; it is vital that you stay up-to-date with these changes.

A certain degree of trust is required for workplaces to return to something approximating normal, and being able to keep track of

your own health and make informed, rational decisions about your own risk-factors will help create that trust.
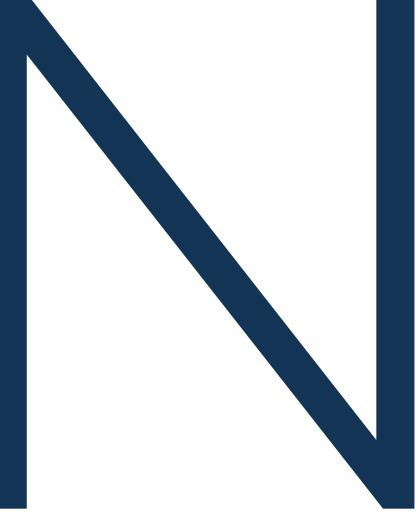
While you cannot and should not be relied on to make every decision about your own health, you should know exactly what kinds of symptoms you need to be on the lookout for and be extra vigilant - the consequences of going into work when you might be sick are simply too great. ▶

Ready Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

From using public transport to entering the office, returning to work will inevitably involve wearing a facemask and applying hand sanitizer very frequently.

Whilst this may seem a straightforward requirement, it is important not to overlook how strange it can feel at first.

On top of this, facemasks need to be very regularly and rigorously cleaned in order to function as intended; many also have an unusual smell to start with.

Getting used to these measures –whether by wearing a face mask around the house or purchasing hand moisturizer to ensure sanitizing doesn't tire your skin out - will help the transition feel far more natural. ▶

Negotiate work flexibility

Returning to the office will be a gradual process, not an overnight shift; how you return should be discussed and negotiated, not dictated from above.

While certain roles and sectors urgently require the resources their office contains, many will find that returning immediately is far less vital.

Being able to stagger the workforce will help employers implement social distancing rules more easily; you should be ready and willing to communicate when and why you think it will be beneficial for you to return to the office.

Again, this may feel alien; just be assured that employers will be grateful for the candor.

About us

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