

## Flexible Work Options - Knowing what to ask for

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Did you know that your workplace does not need to have a policy on flexible work for you to ask for a flexible work option?

### What is Flexible Work?

**Flexible work** means having the opportunity to discuss and implement different ways to do your work that may be a change from the standard way of *how*, *where* and / or *when* you do your work. That might include

- reorganizing your work duties;
- changing or altering your work location; and / or
- changing or altering your work schedule.

Flexible work does not change the basic terms and conditions of your employment it just introduces a different manner of getting the work done.

### What does Flexible Work look like?

Some of the most common types of flexible work are:

**Flextime** (or flexible work hours) means having the opportunity to change or vary your normal consecutive work hours, work days or workweek. It is the most common kind of flexible work.

Flextime can help you manage different issues related to your episodic disability such as difficulties with pain and stiffness in the morning, regular medical appointments, or increasing fatigue in the afternoon.

Flextime hours usually require a period of core hours during the day when you must be available for meetings or other operational requirements. Core hours will be different from business to business.

**Compressed Workweek** means having the opportunity to establish a new work schedule that increases the number of hours in your workday and decreases the number of days in your workweek or, in some cases, changes the number of weeks in your work cycle. This means working out a new workweek.

A Compressed Workweek might be a good choice if you have regular medical appointments or treatments that take more than a few hours or leave you feeling unable to continue work afterwards, as long as you have the capacity to work longer hours for the days when you are at work

**Job Sharing** means having the opportunity to voluntarily share the duties, responsibilities and hours of at least one full-time job between two employees. This kind of arrangement requires that you carefully outline each partner's individual job duties and responsibilities in order to cover operational requirements and business.

Job Sharing is a fantastic way to work part time without having to look for a specific part-time job. For those who are living with a disability that doesn't allow them to work a full 8 hour work-day, this is an arrangement that has a great deal of possibility.

**Work at an Alternate Location** (work from home office) means having the opportunity to regularly work from a home office or other alternate location for all of, or a portion of, your workweek.

This kind of option is extremely helpful for people living with episodic disabilities. Working from home can eliminate the pain and fatigue of commuting and allow you to be more productive for a longer period of the day. It can provide a quiet, safe place for those who need a break from constant client interaction, or if you have a medical appointment or treatment that is closer to home than work, the commuting time can be reduced and rechanneled for work.

### **How do you decide which type of Flexible Work is the right one for you?**

If you are considering approaching your employer about Flexible Work, it helps to be prepared and know what option would work for you. By following the steps below, you can be better prepared to ask for the option that best meets your needs.

When thinking about Flexible Work as a work option, consider the following:

- Make sure you understand what the different options are.
- Make a list of the duties or tasks in your job that require you to be at work at a particular time or at a specific location or to be working within a team on a hands on task.
- Also make a list of the duties or tasks in your job that could be done at a different time and may not be dependent on other people or require that you access a program or information at the workplace that you cannot do from home.

Then, focus on your needs and abilities. Here are some questions you should consider:

- *Is there a particular time of day that I am more productive or less productive?*
  - *Can I arrange my schedule to take advantage of the more productive times?*
  - *Can I split my work hours to provide an extended break and then start working again?*
  - *Would arriving later / earlier, or leaving earlier / later, help me to manage my symptoms so that I can better concentrate on work?*
  - *If I am only really productive in the mornings, is there someone else who would like to share my job and work in the afternoons?*
- *Does my workplace have technology that would allow me to do my work from my home or another location when I need to? i.e. Can I sign into my email or workstation remotely?*
  - *Am I able to focus on work when I am not in the workplace?*
  - *Could I work at home all the time, or one to two days a week, or 2-3 days per month and how would this help me be more productive?*
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Once you have answered these questions for yourself, review your responses and select the option that works for you. **How do I approach my employer?**

Just deciding what time of Flexible Work could be of benefit to you is only half the battle; you also have to approach your employer to see if it might be an acceptable option for them. Below, find several steps to consider in preparing yourself to discuss Flexible Work with your employer. The better prepared you are, the easier the meeting will be.

1. Once you've chosen an option, draw up a sample plan or schedule.

- **Flextime:** If you think you want to ask for flexible work hours, set out your suggested work week. For example:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Total Hours for Week
Each Week	8:00 am - 4:30 pm (7.5 hrs)	9:00 am - 5:30 pm (7.5 hrs)	8:00 am - 4:30 pm (7.5 hrs)	9:30 am - 6:00 pm (7.5 hrs)	8:00 am - 4:30 pm (7.5 hrs)	37.5 hrs

- **Compressed workweek:** A work-week should not exceed 40 regular hours, unless it is part of a schedule like this. . For example:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Total Hours for Week
Week 1	8:00 am - 6:00 pm (9 hrs)	8:00 am - 6:00 pm (9 hrs)	Non-working day	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	34 hrs

Week 2	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	8:00 am - 6:00 pm (9 hrs)	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	8:00 am - 5:00 pm (8 hrs)	41 hrs
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- **Job-sharing:** You and your proposed partner should come up with a schedule that ensures that you are sharing the job equally. For example:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Total Hours for Week
Employee 1	8:30 am - 11:30 am (3 hrs)	8:30 am - 11:30 am (3 hrs)	8:30 am - 1:00 pm (4.5 hrs)	8:30 am - 1:00 pm (4.5 hrs)	8:30 am - 12:15 pm (3.75 hrs)	18.75 hrs
Employee 2	12:30 pm - 5:00 pm (4.5 hrs)	12:30 pm - 5:00 pm (4.5 hrs)	2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (3 hrs)	2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (3 hrs)	12:15 pm - 5:00 pm (3.75 hrs)	18.75 hrs

2. Write down the points that you would like to make when you approach your employer / supervisor / manager and arrange for a meeting.

Remember, you do **NOT** have to disclose what your disability is.

Here are some suggested points to consider:

- a. Say that you would like to make sure that you are contributing your best to your work.
- b. Explain that you have an episodic condition and that some alterations in your work-schedule could be very helpful in ensuring that you can contribute your best on a regular basis. You may want to use the below definition of an episodic disability to help your employer / supervisor / manager understand.
- c. State that you are aware that the company / organization does not have a formal policy on flexible work, but that you have a suggested plan and you would like to discuss the possibility of implementing it.
- d. Stress that this is a suggested plan for discussion and that due to the unpredictable nature of episodic disabilities, there may be times when the schedule may need to be temporarily altered. But in general, you feel that this schedule will provide the best approach for great work.

**Episodic disability is:**

A chronic or recurring condition that has periods of good health that may be interrupted by periods of illness or disability. Often it is difficult to predict when these “episodes” of disability will occur or how long they will last.