


# frequently asked questions about alternative work arrangements



## alternative work arrangements

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The following pages provide easy to read definitions and frequently asked questions about alternative work arrangements (AWA).

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### flextime

- + flextime is an arrangement that allows an employee to alter the starting and/or end time of her/his workday.

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### staggered work hours

- + staggered work hours start and end working hours in a manner that works best for employees, fulfilling the core working hours within a workday (e.g. 8 hours).

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### compressed work weeks

- + Compressed work weeks are an alternative work schedule that allows employees to work more hours per day but work fewer days per week.



# frequently asked questions about alternative work arrangements

## **What is the difference between flextime and staggered work hours?**

Flextime is an arrangement that allows an employee to alter the starting and/or end time of her/his workday. Employees still work the same number of scheduled hours as they would under a traditional schedule.

Staggered work hours start and end working hours in a manner that works best for employees, fulfilling the core working hours within a workday (e.g. 8 hours)

## **What are core hours for a flextime program?**

Core hours are a set of hours when all employees are expected to be at the office, (e.g. 10am – 4pm) under a flextime program.

## **Are flextime arrangement procedures different for exempt and non-exempt employees?**

No, arrangement procedures do not differ.

## **If I work more hours than my original schedule (flextime, working more than 40 hours/week), am I eligible for overtime?**

If you are a non-exempt employee (hourly), you are eligible for overtime for any hours worked over 40 per week. Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay.

## **How will I interact with others who are on a flextime schedule?**

Open and regular communication is very important during core hours. Schedules should be transparent and should be shared in terms of arrival and departure time.

## **Does an employee have to arrive at the same time and leave at the same time everyday under a flextime program?**


This is a decision that has to be made at the management level. Some organization allow employees to flex their arrival and departure time on a daily basis, but ensure that all staff are there during core hours. Others ask an employee to have the same schedule every day for arrival and departure at work.

## **What are compressed work week schedules?**

Compressed work weeks are an alternative work schedule that allows employees to work more hours per day but work fewer days per week. One example is the 4/40 program in which an employee works four 10-hour days and takes a fifth day off. This results in reducing 20 percent of an employee's commute and allows employees to avoid rush hour. Another example is a 9/80, whereby employees can work eight-nine-hour days, one eight-hour day and take a tenth day off. In a 9/80 schedule, employees typically get every weekend and a third week day off every other week. Compressed work weeks have a positive impact on morale, productivity and job satisfaction for the employee and companies are able to recruit and retain valuable skilled workers by offering such strategies.

## **Is it important to have a written policy on compressed work weeks for my company?**

A written policy is essential. It provides the basic information employees need to participate and the available options. Within the written policy, incorporate eligibility requirements, restrictions, monitoring and procedures to participate.



## **What if all my staff wants to work compressed work weeks with Friday's off. No one will be there on Friday, and we need to staff this office every day of the work week. I do not want to get anyone mad at me and I also am not sure how to rate the needs of the requesters to decide who deserves this more and who less. Help?**

Decisions for approving flexible work requests should not be based on personal need but rather on organizational needs. Not everyone has to have the same day off. Most organizations allow for other days that can be allocated for the day off. Changes can be made quarterly or twice a year so that everyone gets a chance to have a three-day weekend at some point.

## **My friend and I work for different departments of the same organization. She was recently changed to a compressed workweek, working four days instead of five. I brought up the subject with my supervisor about a similar arrangement for myself but was turned down. Is this fair?**

Alternative work schedules, including compressed workweeks, are not an across-the-board benefit for employees. Managers and supervisors know the operations of their unit(s) best and are responsible for final decisions on how to get the work accomplished. Keep in mind that supervisors and managers have the authority to say yes or no to a flexible arrangement, or to postpone consideration of a compressed work week program to another time. Since every job, worker and situation are different; it cannot be assumed that the same decision is appropriate for two similar positions.

## **How can I work a compressed work week schedule if I have trouble keeping up with my workload now and I work over 50 hours a week?**

While some flexible work arrangements, such as compressed work, may not be feasible for your situation, other flexible work options may work well. For example, your work may be appropriate for a telework arrangement and you would benefit from saved commuting time or an opportunity to focus on a special project. This will not reduce your hours worked, merely where the work is done.

## **How do compressed work weeks impact hourly employees?**

Based on the Federal Labor Standards Act, Non-exempt staff should maintain the same number of hours worked weekly during the revised schedule as well as when more traditional hours are worked. Remember, over time pay is required for non-exempt staff work in excess of normal work week hours up to forty hours a week.

## **How are holidays and paid time off calculated under a compressed work week program?**

Under a compressed work week program, holiday, sick and vacation time can be confusing. Employees who work 10-hour days and get a day off every week, for example, will get "cheated" if their regularly schedules day off falls on an official holiday – such as Thanksgiving – that all staff receives anyway. Consider the following methods to avoid inequities in holiday, sick and vacation time:

- Reverting back – Require employees to take the first day before a holiday if it falls on their regularly schedule day off and work an additional two hours the day after.
- Credit/Debit – If a holiday falls during the work week, although they would have worked 10 hours, you pay only eight; the balance of two hours is pulled from their vacation or personal holiday bank. Conversely, if the holiday falls on their scheduled day off, eight hours are credited to their holiday/vacation bank.
- Regular Schedule-Some companies require employees to revert back to a regular schedule during holiday and PTO weeks.

## **How do we address management issues when employees are working a compressed work week program?**

- Find solutions to help managers monitor employee attendance. Challenges arise when managers work different schedules than their employees, arriving and leaving at varying times or taking different compressed work week days off.
- Establish core times and core days if inter-departmental or all-company meetings are regular or essential.
- Involve company accountants in developing the policy to expedite accounting for payroll, holiday pay, vacation, overtime, absences, etc. Train managers on policies and procedures.



## How do you avoid overtime for a 9/80 program?

Avoiding the necessity for overtime payments in this situation requires a non-traditional method of defining workdays and workweeks. Under the 9/80 schedule, you must begin the workweek for day shift employees between the fourth and fifth hours of work on any day of the week, and define the workweek so that employees will not be required to work more than 40 hours.

For example, you could start the workweek at noon on Friday and end at noon the following Friday. Employees could work nine hours each day, except on alternate Thursdays, when employees could work eight hours, and on alternate Fridays, when employees do not work. This allows some of the Friday hours to be worked in one workweek, and some in the next workweek.

This means the employee would work some hours of the shift on one workday, and the remaining hours of that shift on the next workday.