

Negotiating for flexible working

In an ideal world your flexibility needs would have been discussed well before you come to discuss your offer with a business. We've published articles in the past on [how to ask for flexibility while interviewing](#) and our suggestion is to do it that way - the stakes are lower, the opportunity for discussion is broader, and people have fewer expectations.

Assuming this is the first time it's come up, your negotiations around flexibility will be all about seeking **clarity** and **compromise**.

Clarity: are there any grey areas on the job spec or in the business's culture of flexibility in general? Grey areas need to be discussed and eradicated - both parties should go away completely clear on what's been arranged. (You wouldn't accept vagueness on something like salary here, right?)

Compromise: it's possible that a business will be hesitant to meet all your flexible needs. As with the rest of your compensation, you should decide ahead of time where your walkaway points are - what you absolutely cannot compromise on and what you're prepared to negotiate.

Before you negotiate, make sure you're as flex-prepared as you can possibly be. The responsibility falls on you to demonstrate how you can minimise disruption to the business; maybe that's unfair, but it's how things are right now. Have your solutions prepared, lead the conversation, and use a version of the framework we mentioned in our previous guides:

That won't work for me > This is why it won't work > This is what will work for both of us > This is why it will work for both of us

Again, if you can identify a problem and present a solution all in one go, a reasonable business will be prepared to compromise. You're trying to present yourself as the manager's dream: a totally self-managing employee, who's confident with autonomy and aware of responsibility.



"Unfortunately I may not always be able to make this agreed start-time because of my childcare responsibilities. It will be less disruptive for the wider company and more productive for myself and the team if I work to X arrangement. I can work later at X point and work remotely during X period, so my overall hours won't decrease."



“I noted that we have an early stand-up meeting on Mondays. I’ve checked this against my commute and it’s not a practical use of time at all. I’ll spend much of the early morning stuck in traffic. There’s no need to reschedule the meeting - I’ll work from home and attend via video link. I’ll come to the office once transit time is down to an acceptable level.”



“I noted that the team use Slack and other messaging tools to stay in contact. I think this is great but I also think it’s important to set hard boundaries to allow for rest and recovery. I won’t be checking my messages X time each night and before X time in the morning. There are a variety of ways to get in touch with me if there’s an emergency.”



“I would like to work remotely twice a week; these days will help me balance my childcare responsibilities in the early mornings but I’ll also use the time away from the office to focus on strategy and business development. It’s very important that I’m not out of the loop and that the team’s opportunity to collaborate isn’t diminished so here are my suggestions for managing that...”



“I struggle to start productive for a 5-day week so I’d prefer to just work four days and take Fridays off.”

“My commute is a nightmare so I’ll be with you as early as I can manage in the mornings.”



“What’s the best way to let you know if I’m working from home?”

We would recommend trying to describe your initial need in a way that’s both easy to understand and something you can sell to the business as a win-win. Make it a human problem, then explain why the solution to that human problem adds even more value to you as a candidate.

The further from the “norm” your flexibility need is the harder you’re probably going to have to work. Flexibility needs due to children or other caregiving responsibilities are easily understood. Preferring to work a four day week to keep your focus sharp and your energy levels at maximum is a less-embraced concept, so you’re going to have to work harder to explain why it’s going to be of benefit to the business.

Flexible work should improve your work/life balance, making you a more agile, engaged and energetic employee. It’s a win-win for the business. Keep this as the core principle of your flex negotiation.