

# Find the Right Alternative Work Schedule for You

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A generation ago, all work was structured as a 9-to-5 day in an office or workplace. But now, with advances in technology and dual working parents taking the majority in the labor force, alternative work arrangements give many workers more flexibility to balance life and home responsibilities. You may have an alternative work schedule that lets you get to work early and leave early, or telecommute one day or more each week.

Each alternative work program comes with pluses and minuses. You'll need to consider your own needs and situation, including your child care options, to find the right one.



## • Alternate Work Can Mean Telecommuting

When people think of workplace flexibility, they often assume you're talking about telecommuting. Perhaps that's because working from home has become one of the most widely adopted alternate work arrangements, to let individuals skip the daily commute and enjoy focused work time away from the distractions of the office.

On the plus side, you can manage the occasional emergencies, like a sick child or burst pipe. On the minus, you run the risk of being passed over for work because you're not visible, or simply becoming isolated in your home office. Don't assume telecommuting will solve your work-life balance woes; take the time to discover whether telecommuting is right for you.



## • Shift Your Work Hours

Just as some people use the term flex-place to describe telecommuting, they use the term flex-time to refer to shifting your work schedule to accommodate family needs. Perhaps you come in early, to avoid morning rush hour, and leave early enough to pick up the kids or attend a school event. Or maybe you shift your schedule later, to arrive after rush hour and leave once the evening commute has subsided. Some parents will tag team, with one working an early shift and the other a late one, to minimize child care costs and maximize the kids' time with a parent.



### • **The Working Mom Dream: Part-Time Hours**

So many working parents I meet talk about part-time hours as if this alternative work arrangement would solve all their work-life balance problems. Certainly, when work spills over into family time you might imagine that an agreement with your employer would hold back the tide.

But a part-time schedule only works if your job responsibilities and duties actually shrink to fit the hours for which you're being paid. So before you embark on a reduced hour negotiation, make sure you can restructure your position -- you don't want to end up being paid for 30 hours a week and working the same old 40 hours.



### • **Consider a Compressed Work Week**

Another popular alternate work arrangement is a compressed work week, in which you still put in 80 hours in a two week period, but make each day a bit longer so you can take one day off every week or every other week. Often, government employees have access to this alternative.

The benefit of this schedule is that you get a full day off -- or two -- to run errands, spend time with family or whatever else you choose. But you don't have to give up part of your salary, the way you do in a reduced hour schedule. The downside, of course, is the long, exhausting days.



### • **The Ultimate Alternative Work Program: Job Sharing**

For the most high-powered jobs -- such as law, medicine and business -- the only solution to work-life conflict is a job share. That's because your work responsibilities simply can't fit into a 35 hour work week; they often don't even fit into a 50 hour work week.

So for these career women (and men), a promising alternative work arrangement is a job share. It can be tricky to line up, but hugely freeing when it works well. You need the right partner, open lines of communication and a willing manager. But the challenge is worth it. Just imagine weekends and evenings free of work, without having to give up the career you love.



- **Share Your Alternative Work Ideas**

The alternative work weeks above represent the most common programs seen in the U.S. workplace. But perhaps you've seen a different structure in your workplace. Or maybe you figured out a way to extend maternity leave, manage a sick child or conquer the other common challenges that working parents face. Please share your story by clicking the links below!