



# How to go back to work after Christmas

## (without wanting to cry at your desk)

The first step is to embrace the blues. Because they're not your fault. Researchers have found that the negative emotions associated with the end of the festive period, plus two weeks of irregular sleep patterns (not to mention irregular breakfast patterns) can throw our body-clocks out of sync and make us feel jet-lagged.

Returning to our normal routine of early nights and waking up in the dark can induce what's been dubbed 'social jet lag'. Symptoms can include: feeling sluggish, struggling to sleep, indigestion, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, clumsiness, lack of energy and general fatigue.

Of course, one way to negate these side-effects is to stick, as far as possible, to your normal waking hours over Christmas and New Year. But, let's face it, that ship has probably sailed.

The main thing to remember is that you will display some strengths and some weaknesses during your first days back (and, no, you won't be able to work out which day of the week it is for another fortnight).

Start gently, by all means – unless you're the kind of person who hits the ground running and is in the work gym by 8am on day one - but don't use the period post-festive break as an excuse to slack. It won't look good.

Instead, acknowledge where your dwindling energy will be best used to get 2017 rolling. Being honest with yourself is half the battle and will mean you don't end up feeling frustrated, or letting others down.

Part of this is accepting that you will have devote a chunk of time to tackling your email inbox. A thankless but necessary task. If your entire office had a two week break, you might be lucky enough to be in the double figures.

But for many, trawling through an inbox that looks more like a war zone than anything, can take the best part of a day. Plus, you'll probably send more internal emails than usual to colleagues this week. After all, no one wants to be accused of slacking.

Once you've shouldered this, it's easier to prepare for the week ahead. Try these tips:

- go through your diary for the day ahead the night before
- trying to go to sleep at a decent hour.
- block out an hour in your diary during the day for emails and internal catch ups.
- be organised the night before – choose your clothes for the next day

**EVERYTHING  
IS GOING  
TO BE  
ALRIGHT.  
MAYBE NOT  
TODAY  
BUT  
EVENTUALLY.**

Try to arrive at your desk in the morning with all the positive mental attitude you can muster. Don't grumble about the end of the holidays, or get overly caught up in your colleagues' stories of insane parties or hilarious new year's resolutions; focus on the year and opportunities ahead, and remind yourself why you enjoy your job (and if you really can't remember, perhaps now's the time to look for another).



Whether you look for a new role, or take up a hobby – it's a good idea to think about something new as you head back to the office. You've just had a glimpse into a world where work wasn't the be all and end all. Try to capitalise on this objectivity. Burying your head in the sand won't bring Christmas back.

Remember our creative juices flow more after returning to work, when our brains have been in a state of relaxation – unhampered by rules, regulations and office politics.

That's something to take advantage of, whether you throw yourself into brainstorms, present a new idea to your boss or channel it into something extra-curricular that will boost your overall productivity.

And finally, remember that everyone is in the same boat. Some people even went back to work earlier than you. Only Father Christmas can get away without making a to-do list until next December rolls around.

## TIPS FOR RETURNING TO WORK AFTER VACATION

1. DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR ALARM CLOCK.
2. GET TO WORK A LITTLE EARLY TO CATCH-UP ON E-MAILS.
3. PRETEND YOU REMEMBER HOW TO DO YOUR JOB.



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