



# **Tips for researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave and advice for institutions and employers**

**Are you a fixed-term researcher about to take maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave?**

**This leaflet has been compiled by researchers for researchers and is packed with handy tips for before you go on leave, whilst you are away and when you come back.**

**If you are an institution or employer, this leaflet contains a useful advice section to help you and your organisation in managing family leave in the most supportive way possible.**

## Before you go on leave

Congratulations! Whatever your reasons for taking family leave, we couldn't be happier for you.

Know your rights with respect to contracts and funding and be prepared to negotiate where necessary. There's often more flexibility in the system than you think.

Agree with your line manager how things will work before, during and after your leave. Focus on what you would like to happen and get it in writing.

Understand the benefits to which you are entitled, from the government and from your institution, and get childcare arranged as soon as possible.

Develop an academic support network among your colleagues. Get included in funding bids, and make sure that someone will be able to speak on your behalf while you're away.

## While you're away

Decide whether you want to 'stay on top of things' during your leave or to step back completely. But be realistic about how much work you'll actually be able to do.

Be clear with colleagues about whether they can contact you during your leave. It's OK to stay in touch, but it's fine to switch off and focus on your family, too.

Use 'keeping-in-touch' days to stay up-to-date with what's going on at work and to make progress on things like papers and grant applications.

Enjoy your time with your family. Whatever your reasons for taking leave, it's a special time and you won't get it back. Don't feel pressured into coming back to work earlier than you'd like.

Don't feel guilty about taking leave. You're not letting anyone down. And your institution (probably) isn't going to collapse because you're not there.

## When you come back . . .

Plan your return to work as carefully as you planned your time away.

Use flexible working opportunities to ease your transition back into work, such as part-time working or working from home. Use any holiday pay accrued during your leave to soften the financial blow.

Have a 'returning to work' interview with your line manager. Use it to learn about what has happened in your absence and to agree how you can best get back into the swing of things.

See if you can get a reduced teaching load for your first semester back, to allow you to spend more time getting up to speed with your research activities.

Pay it forward. Remember what it was like for you to take leave and do what you can to make sure that those taking leave in the future have a better experience.



For more  
information,  
please go to  
[www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/familyleave)  
/familyleave



## Ten tips for better family leave

1. Create a culture where taking time for your family is valued and respected.
2. When someone takes family leave, be happy for them. Don't treat it as a problem to be overcome.
3. Develop clear and fair family leave policies for all students and staff.
4. Be sensitive about the reasons people take family leave. And make sure that others are, too.
5. Treat staff on fixed-term appointments as you would permanent members of staff.
6. Try to ensure that fixed-term researchers taking family leave have a job to come back to.
7. Implement a research advocate scheme to look after the interests of researchers on leave.
8. Make sure that human resources staff are well-informed and can provide appropriate advice.
9. Provide those returning from leave with flexible working options for a phased return.
10. Give researchers coming back from leave a reduced teaching load, to help them to get back into their research.



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