

Re-entering the workplace after some time and not sure where to start?

On maternity leave and need to think about returning to work and discussing options with your employer?

After full time parenting, the idea of returning to the workforce and finding that perfect new job or settling back into your old job, whilst still finding time to manage and enjoy family life, can seem impossible. Particularly if you don't have an employer to return to or you are not sure what work arrangements your current employer will accommodate.

The following checklist and tips aims to make the return-to-work experience more straightforward for you. It explains the types of things you will need to prepare and plan for before you re-enter the workforce.

To begin, the more you know about what it is that you want, the more likely you are to find the ideal return to work option that is right for you and your family.

Start by asking yourself the following questions...

Make a note of the answers to these questions. It will help you to identify what's important and stay focussed on getting the right job and working arrangements for you.

What do you want to gain from returning to work?

- ◆ Will you return to your previous profession or is it time to start something new?
- ◆ If you are looking for a new job, what type of employer / organisation do you want to work for, what type of responsibilities and tasks do you want, what will motivate you and fit with family; what is important to you? How will you find a new job?
- ◆ If you are returning to your same job/employer prior to maternity leave, what do you think are your employer's needs and expectations compared with your own? What needs could you compromise and negotiate?
- ◆ What days and hours do you want to work?
- ◆ What flexible work arrangements would you be prepared to consider?
- ◆ What childcare arrangements will you need and how will you source care? What alternative care options might be feasible eg: sharing a nanny?
- ◆ What can you do to prepare your family for your return to work?
- ◆ What are the financial implications of returning to work?

Important practical steps when planning your return to work

Seek family support

- ◆ Talk to your family about planning your return to work: discuss what you hope to gain; what working arrangements you'd like; how you are feeling about the prospect of returning to work; what support do you need and what changes do you anticipate once you've returned to work. Get their feedback; listen to their comments and suggestions.
- ◆ Seek support from others in the areas you need it most e.g.: someone who can baby sit whilst you meet with your employer; if you are job hunting so that you may attend interviews, what possible household chores could you share/outsource so you can focus your efforts on planning for your return to work!

Consider your ideal return to work

- ◆ Brainstorm and consider your ideal return to work scenario; is it an option to return to your old job with alternative working arrangements? or would you like to find a new job/career or employer?
- ◆ If you are looking for a new job/employer, what type of work would you like to do and how could it positively meet the needs of you and your family?

What hours/days will you need to work that will fit with your family commitments and care arrangements?

- ◆ How could you structure your job tasks/responsibilities to accommodate flexible work options eg: could you job share, flexible start and finish times, what work could be done from home etc? How would reduced hours affect your pay versus childcare costs?
- ◆ Write down all the possible job options that match your needs and consider how these job options will impact you and your family. Create a short-list of the best options that fit with your needs.

Common flexible work arrangements you and your employer can consider

- ◆ Permanent part time - fixed part time working days
- ◆ Job share – split full time job responsibilities with at least one other person and work part time
- ◆ Reduced hours to work core office hours only eg: 10am-3pm
- ◆ Variable work days eg: working 3 days one week, 2 days the following week
- ◆ Casual, roster or shift work with flexible days and hours
- ◆ Varied work location – part in office, part at home
- ◆ Re-organising your workload or role to allow for a flexible working week eg: identifying what work can be done at home or on certain days or at certain times and arranging a work schedule and location around this
- ◆ Extra annual leave during school holidays

What will be the financial impact of returning to work?

- ◆ Look at the costs that will be associated with your return to work such as childcare and transport and prepare a weekly budget of the likely costs versus likely income. If required, seek help from professional financial planners, accountants or government family assistance programs.

Review your childcare needs and options

- ◆ Research all possible childcare facilities and options that will suit you and your family eg: in-home care, government versus private day care centre, shared care options etc. See [mums@work](http://www.mumsatwork.com.au) childcare assistance at www.mumsatwork.com.au or call the Family Assistance Office. If possible, try and line up tentative care arrangements before you talk with your employer so you know what your care limitations are.

Prepare for job hunting

- ◆ If you are looking for a new job, start the job searching process by clarifying what type of job you want, update your resume (remembering to explain full time parenting absence and any extra curricular activities you participated in during this time). Contact [mums@work](http://www.mumsatwork.com.au) to help match you to your ideal job and to update your resume. Register with appropriate 'mum friendly' job advertisers such as www.careermums.com.au and recruitment agencies to find your ideal job.

Re-fresh your skills

- ◆ If you are concerned that your professional talents and skills have waned since taking on the challenges of full time parenting, seek ways to re-fresh your knowledge. You might do this by enrolling in re-fresher courses, contacting industry associations to get connected to your profession again, by undertaking volunteer work, by asking your employer to send you copies of latest company plans and news before you start back at work.

Learn from other mums who have returned to work

- ◆ Contact other mums you know that have returned to work, ask how they returned to work and what helpful tips they could pass onto you. Contact past work colleagues; particularly those who are working parents that might be able to suggest work options and help with your job search.

What can you negotiate?

- ◆ In an ideal world we would love to find the perfect job; however ask yourself what are you prepared to trade-off in return for other benefits? Eg: are you prepared to reduce your work responsibilities in return for work less working hours?
- ◆ Plan to talk about realistic working arrangements with your employer, thinking about both of your needs and how it could work to your mutual advantage.
- ◆ Be proactive and contact your employer as early as possible to explore options.
- ◆ Ask your employer to 'trial' a flexible working arrangement for a period of time to see how things go; revise as required.

Preparing for your first day back

- ◆ Plan and prioritise. Create a to do list; identify things you need to do to get you started such as arranging childcare, agreeing work responsibilities and flexible arrangements with your current or new employer.
- ◆ Prepare for your first day back at work by making the necessary arrangements with your family and employer. Eg: perhaps you can return to work gradually by starting on reduced days/hours to allow you and your family to get used to your new working life.
- ◆ Devise a plan together with your partner about what you will need to change in the household, how you can support one another, how can you make the adjustment easier for your children etc.

Create your return to work plan

What do I want for my future: what are my work and family needs?

What flexible work arrangements will I need?

What care arrangements will I need to make?

What type of new job am I looking for? or what return-to-work options would I like to approach my current employer with?

What aspect of my return to work concerns me most and who / what might help me to overcome this?

Other considerations...

Weekly Planner—To Do List

(Print and stick on fridge)

TIP: Create a small to do list for each week so your return to work plan isn't overwhelming

Week one

To do	Completed (tick)	Who might be able to help me further

Week two

To do	Completed (tick)	Who might be able to help me further

Week three

To do	Completed (tick)	Who might be able to help me further

Final tips

Most importantly, think positively, be organised and realistic, don't take on too much all at once.

Plan weekly activities and use a 'to do list' with your family to make your return to work more manageable and less overwhelming.

Revise your ideas and plans regularly. Take breaks, reflect and re-energise, learning from positive and negative experiences along your return-to-work journey.

Tips on how to find a new job can be found on our website.

Where to go if you need a helping hand...

If you are stuck and would like to discuss your return-to-work ideas and plans, please contact mums@work and our career consultants will be happy to assist.

Call a mums@work career guidance consultant today and let us help you back to work.

E info@mumsatwork.com.au

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W www.mumsatwork.com.au

If you would like to register as a job seeker to access jobs advertised with family friendly employers go to www.careermums.com.au

