



Should I disclose that I am a carer?

Should I tell my manager? This is a personal decision. You do not have to tell your employer about your caring role. However, doing so, may open up the opportunity to discuss the support and work arrangements you need to help you balance work and care. Some people find it useful to 'test' the carer culture of their workplace first. To start with, find out if your employer has policies for supporting employees with caring responsibilities. You could also seek out colleagues with caring responsibilities and ask them whether they have found the workplace supportive.

Should I tell my colleagues? This is again a personal decision. Any flexible work arrangement agreed to with your manager will likely have an impact on your colleagues, so it is worth considering:

- whether the workplace culture is supportive
- how any previous disclosure of caring in the workplace was received
- who you feel you can trust with personal matters, and the possible impact if you tell some colleagues but not others
- whether your colleagues need to know what to do if you need to leave work suddenly

Negotiating flexible working arrangements

Your employer may not immediately understand your needs as a carer, and it is important to present a good business case for flexible working arrangements.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Research your employer's policies, as there may be workplace provisions you are unaware of. These policies may fall under titles such as leave, flexible work or reasonable adjustments. If your employer has a flexible working policy follow the guidelines and information in the policy. If not, carers, as identified in the [Carer Recognition Act 2010 \(Cwth\)](#), have the right to request flexible working arrangements after 12 months of continuous employment. See the [Fair Work Ombudsmen website](#) for full details as to eligibility.



CONSIDER WHAT YOU ARE PREPARED TO DISCLOSE

You are not obliged to disclose sensitive details to support your request. Find out your workplace's privacy policy around your confidential information.



KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

Think about what arrangements may help you balance work with caring responsibilities (e.g. flexible start/finish times or working remotely). You do not have to have the 'perfect' solution before talking with your manager, in fact, it can pay to be flexible and open to ideas.



PREPARE FOR OBJECTIONS & COMPROMISE

A positive outcome is more likely if you approach your manager with solutions rather than problems. Think about how changing your work patterns may impact the business, and how this could be addressed. Understanding the business case for flexible working may help in your conversation, and highlight any benefits they may eventuate. For example, extended start and finish times may provide an opportunity for greater customer satisfaction by providing services outside of standard business hours. There are also the benefits for your employer of retaining you. If you are working in a team, flexible working arrangements could be beneficial and utilised by the whole team.



PRACTISE

You may feel more confident if you practise the conversation with family or friends. It may also help to have key points written down.

PLAN THE DISCUSSION

Request a meeting with your manager in a private place where you will not be interrupted. Allow plenty of time for your discussion.



DEVELOP A PROPOSAL OR LETTER

Once you have discussed your needs, document your ideas and request in a letter or proposal to your manager, or follow workplace guidelines or policies if they are available.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSAL

It may be helpful to set a fixed period, such as three to six months, to trial a flexible working arrangement. That way both you and your employer can get a better idea of what will or won't work, and how it can be adjusted if necessary. If you and your manager agree on an arrangement and it is working well, it is still a good idea to formalise your arrangement in writing. You may also need to consider the impact on colleagues and clients and how to manage your role and associated tasks.

You may wish to include examples and solutions for potential workplace interruptions, such as:

- emergency leave
- managing medical appointments or care arrangements
- communication protocols when you are in meetings etc
- last minute working from home arrangements
- impact of position or task sharing

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has an [Employee flexibility toolkit](#). It includes a section on requesting flexibility and addressing manager's concerns about flexibility.

Conversational guide

1. EXPLAIN your situation

Outline your caring situation and its impact on your work commitments. Explain that you want to continue working while caring and are committed to your work. There is no need to apologise for being a carer or the responsibilities that you have.

2. OUTLINE your request

Explain what arrangements might help you balance your work and caring responsibilities. If possible, give a time frame for your request, eg, “My caring responsibilities will start in June and may last for three months” or “This is a long-term commitment but I will keep you informed of any changes”. Make it clear that you have considered the impact of your request on the business and your colleagues. Outline any suggestions you have to minimise the disruption and on how colleagues might support you (if you have discussed this with them).

3. DISCUSS and plan ahead

Remember to listen actively, stay open to ideas, and be prepared to be flexible when you discuss how to make the arrangement work. For example, do you need particular equipment to work remotely? How could you and your manager keep up-to-date on work outcomes? How might you keep in contact and maintain relationships with your colleagues? Once you come to an agreement, it is best to formalise this in writing.

4. FOLLOW UP with your employer

Set a time for a follow-up meeting to discuss outstanding issues, assess how things are going and decide whether further action is needed. Remember, you do not need to agree on everything in the first meeting. You may both need to get more information and it may work to set a fixed period such as three to six months, to trial a flexible working arrangement. That way both you and your employer can get a better idea of what will or won't work, and how it can be adjusted if necessary. If you and your manager agree on an arrangement and it is working well, it is still a good idea to formalise your arrangement in writing. This will protect you in case your line manager changes in the future.



If your employer refuses your request, try to negotiate. You may be able to find a different solution that meets both your needs. If you still cannot reach an agreement, your workplace may have policies to help reach a solution. You could also explore external mediation from a third party such as the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).