

Flexible work request response email template

Respond to a request for remote work, a compressed schedule, or reduced hours, with a decision and a trial plan.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

Requests for flexibility, such as working from home more often, shifting hours, compressing the week, or going part time, are increasingly common. Responding thoughtfully, even when the answer is no, keeps good employees. Ignoring them or answering with a flat no often leads to a resignation a few months later.

Many employers approve flexibility on a trial basis, such as 60 or 90 days, with a review date. That lowers the risk for the manager and gives the employee a fair chance. If the request involves a disability, pregnancy, or religious practice, treat it as an accommodation request and use the accommodation acknowledgment instead. Our remote and hybrid guide covers policy design.

Version 1: Approved on a trial basis

SUBJECT Your flexible schedule request

Hi [Employee first name],

Thanks for your request to [describe the arrangement, such as work from home on Mondays and Fridays]. I'm glad to approve it on a trial basis starting [Date].

Here is how it will work:

- Schedule: [Details]
- Availability: [Core hours or response expectations]
- Review: we will meet on [Date, about 60 or 90 days out] to see how it's going for you, the team, and our customers.

If anything isn't working before then, either of us can raise it. Changes to the arrangement will be made with notice.

[Manager name]

Version 2: Request not approved, with alternatives

SUBJECT About your flexible work request

Hi [Employee first name],

Thank you for your request to [arrangement]. I have thought about it carefully, and I can't approve it as proposed because [specific business reason, such as the role requires being on site to supervise the second shift].

I would still like to find something that helps. Could any of these work?

- [Alternative 1, such as a later start time two days a week]
- [Alternative 2]

Let's talk this week. If your request is related to a health condition, pregnancy, or religious practice, please tell me or [HR contact], because we would handle it as an accommodation request.

[Manager name]

Subject lines to try

- Your flexible schedule request
- About your flexible work request
- Trial schedule starting [Date]
- Re: remote work request
- Let's find a schedule that works

How to personalize it

- Respond within two weeks of the request.
- Approve on a trial basis with a review date when you are unsure.
- Give a specific business reason if you decline.
- Offer at least one alternative.

Mistakes to avoid

- Approving flexibility for favorites only.
- Missing an accommodation request because it wasn't labeled one.
- Changing an approved arrangement without notice.
- Reducing pay or classification without HR review.

Legal and compliance notes

Some cities and states have flexible scheduling laws. San Francisco's Family Friendly Workplace Ordinance, for example, gives employees with caregiving responsibilities a right to request flexible

arrangements and requires a written response. Reduced hours can affect benefits eligibility, ACA full-time status, and exempt status if salary drops below the threshold. Requests tied to disability, pregnancy, or religion are accommodation requests.

When to send it

Discuss the request within a week and give a written answer within two weeks. Hold the trial review on the agreed date.

Before you hit send

- Dates, deadlines, and costs match the plan documents and carrier materials.
- Medical details stay between the employee and HR, not the manager or team.
- Required notices, such as FMLA forms or the Summary of Benefits and Coverage, are attached or scheduled.
- The employee knows exactly who to call, with a phone number.
- State leave programs and paid sick leave rules were checked for the employee's work location.

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