

PTO request approval email template

Approve a time-off request clearly and remind the employee of coverage and handoff.

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

When to use this template

Most PTO approvals happen with one click in a time and attendance system. An email is useful for longer absences, such as a week or more, requests that need coverage planning, or teams that don't use a system. It confirms the dates, notes the balance, and agrees on the handoff.

The approval is also a chance to show managers mean it when they say take your time off. A sentence telling the employee to actually disconnect makes a difference, especially in teams where people feel guilty for taking vacation. Our PTO policy guide covers accrual and approval rules.

Version 1: Standard approval

SUBJECT Approved: time off [Start date] to [End date]

Hi [Employee first name],

Your time off from [Start date] to [End date] is approved. That's [Number] days, and your remaining balance after this will be [Number] days.

Before you go, please:

- Hand off [Key work] to [Coworker name]
- Set your out-of-office message and calendar

While you're away, please actually disconnect. The team has it covered.

Enjoy the time off.

[Manager name]

Version 2: Approval with coverage note

SUBJECT Your time off is approved, plus coverage plan

Hi [Employee first name],

Good news: your request for [Dates] is approved.

Because [it overlaps with Event or another team member's leave], here is the coverage plan we agreed on:

- [Coworker name] will handle [Task]
- [Coworker name] will cover [Shifts or responsibilities]

Please send [Coworker names] a short handoff note by [Date].

Have a great break.

[Manager name]

Subject lines to try

- Approved: time off [Start date] to [End date]
- Your time off is approved
- Your PTO request for [Dates]
- Enjoy your time off, [First name]
- Time off approved, plus coverage plan

How to personalize it

- Confirm the exact dates and the remaining balance.
- Agree on a coverage person by name.
- Approve requests in the order received when several overlap.
- Tell the employee to disconnect, and mean it.

Mistakes to avoid

- Approving and then asking the employee to stay on call.
- Sitting on requests for weeks.
- Granting time off unevenly across the team.
- Approving in conversation only, with no written record.

Legal and compliance notes

Many states and cities require paid sick leave, which usually can't be denied for qualifying reasons and may have limits on notice requirements. Some states, including California, treat earned vacation as wages that can't be forfeited and must be paid out at termination. For exempt employees, partial-day absences can generally be charged to PTO but not deducted from salary.

| When to send it

Respond within two to three business days of a request. For peak periods, set a request deadline and approve all requests together using a fair rule.

| 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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