

# Contracting - taking holidays and time off

## Introduction

When you are contracting you will want to take holidays.

This article discusses:

- o Can contractors take holidays
- o Length and amount of holidays that can be taken
- o Contractual issues
- o The timing of holidays around your contracts

## Can Contractors Take Holidays?

As a contractor, you can take holidays very similar to permanent members of staff.

It is very rare that you will be required to work every day during the contract period, unless the contract length is less than one month.

You might also like to plan time off during a future contract (renewal or new one) which will require a little planning.

## Length and Total Amount of Holidays

If you take time off during a contract then it is very unlikely that you will be allowed to take more than two weeks off at a time.

If there are quiet periods during your contract then most clients will let you take ad-hoc days off at very short notice. This saves them money and does not affect project deadlines.

If you wish to take long periods away from contracting (one month or more) then this is best done between contracts.

You are not limited to a certain number of days per year, because your time off is not paid by the client. You can take as many days off as you want, provided the client agrees that you do not need to provide your services during that time.

## Contracts and Holidays

Taking holidays in no way changes the length of your contract. Contracts have a fixed start and end date.

If the client wishes you to extend your contract for a few weeks, to cover for potential holiday taken, then you would need to sign a contract renewal. This is extremely rare though.

## Timing and booking of Holidays - Existing Contracts

There are no set rules for how to book holidays when you are a contractor. The key is to ensure you keep your clients happy whilst taking advantage of the flexible lifestyle contracting offers.

Here are some guidelines for dealing with existing clients:

- o If you want time off during your existing contract, or an agreed renewal, then simply request the time off from your boss.
- o If you strongly suspect you will be offered a renewal which you will accept then again speak to your boss.
- o If you do not think you will be offered a renewal, or don't want to renew then go ahead and book your holiday – you are the boss!

## Timing and booking of Holidays - New Contracts

When you are looking for a new contract you might have holiday already booked which you would need to take during that contract.

Here are some points to consider:

- o Don't plan on any holidays for more than a week within the month of a new contract. This could affect your chances of securing the contract.
- o Wait until you have received an offer before you mention that you have holiday booked. Having holidays booked might not get you

chosen for interview by the agent and you will fall at the first hurdle.

- o After receiving a contract offer, if you have holidays booked then check with the client that you can take time off before signing the contract.

### Time off Between Contracts

If you wish to take time off for more than 3 weeks then this will need to be done between contracts.

Bear in mind that on your return from holiday it could take between one week and a month to secure a new contract.

For this reason, if your planned holiday is less than 3 weeks it is better to plan it during an existing contract, so that you have something to come back to immediately.

If you did take holiday at the end of one contract you could attempt to line up a new contract ready for your return. However, most clients hire contractors on very short notice (less than one month), and the process can take a couple of weeks. The practicalities of trying this make it difficult to do.

### Summary - Key Points

- o Contractors can take as much holiday as they like, provided the client agrees to the time off.
- o For holidays longer than a month these will need to be done between contracts and you will need to also take into account the downtime of searching for a new contract on your return.
- o If you holidays are short (2 weeks or less) then you will maximise your annual revenues by taking them during existing contracts.

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