

Automatic Replies (Out of Office)

Setting an out-of-office message on your work email is a practical way to let coworkers and other contacts outside of your organization know you'll be hard to reach—if not unreachable—for a certain amount of time. Here are a few basic etiquette tips to keep your away message simple and professional before your next vacation.

1. Include a greeting and sign-off.

Of course, how you start an OOO message will depend on your personal preference and work environment. While a big "hello" isn't absolutely necessary, you have to begin somewhere, and it's nice to add a human touch. If jumping right into "I'm currently out of the office..." feels too weird and detached to you, ease into it with a simple, "Hi there," or "Thank you for your email."

The same applies to your signature. You're welcome to leave off with the date of your return, but if it makes sense to close out with something like, "Thank you!", "Best, (your name)", or "Have a great weekend (or insert holiday here)!", go for it.

2. Include how long you'll be out.

Mention start and end dates: "I will be traveling from July 3–7 and won't be checking email. I'll respond to your note as soon as I can when I'm back in the office July 8." (Don't forget to turn your vacation responder off when you return!).

3. Include whether or not you'll be checking email.

An away message isn't only helpful when you're going totally off the grid. You might be traveling for work or working remotely, making communication sporadic and WiFi connection iffy. If you won't be checking or responding to emails, say so (see above example). Otherwise, it's helpful to set a message warning people you won't be as reliably reachable due to travel or on-site obligations. It's all about setting expectations for those trying to reach you. For example: "Thank you for your note! I will be traveling for a photo shoot until July 3 and will be checking email periodically/have limited access to email, and may be slow to respond."

4. Include how to reach you (if at all).

If you'll be available in some capacity, outline how exactly to get in touch. For example: "I won't be checking email, but if you need to reach me for any reason, please contact me on my cell..." Or: "If this is time-sensitive, please feel free to re-email me on (date you return) so it's at the top of my inbox." Or: "For urgent requests, please contact (name of an assistant, colleague, freelancer, or other available, in-office coverage)". Before including another coworker's contact info in your OOO, clear it with them—even if you're their superior, a heads-up is still a nice courtesy.

5. Avoid unnecessary personal details.

If you're out on maternity/paternity leave or getting married that weekend (!), that's perfectly fine to include—but that's about as far as personal sharing needs to go in an auto reply. You want the person on the receiving end to know a), whether or not you'll be answering their email, and b), when they can expect to hear back from you.

<https://www.realsimple.com/work-life/technology/communication-etiquette/out-of-office-message>