

THE SABBATICAL JOURNEY TOOLKIT

What is a sabbatical?

Ever wanted to just put life on pause for a few months to take a break, recharge and do something amazing? We've got a word for that. It's called a sabbatical.

“*An extended break from work to pursue another interest*”

And while the definition of a sabbatical varies, it always revolves around taking an extended break from work to pursue another interest. Travelling, learning, creating - the possibilities are endless.

How long is a sabbatical?

Longer than a vacation. A sabbatical can be anywhere from one to 12 months. What is considered a sabbatical differs country to country. In America, where the annual leave is usually only two weeks, a month seems like a huge amount of time and one month sabbaticals are the most common. In Europe, where 6-weeks vacation annually is common, it won't feel like a sabbatical unless it's a few months. The general rule? Double your annual leave allocation - that's a sabbatical for you.

Sabbatical policies also differ company to company to check your allowances and policy rules with your HR team.

What can you do on a sabbatical?

Travel – Sabbaticals often involve some travel to immerse you in new experiences. The world becomes your playground. A survey of the Beyond a Break sabbatical loving community showed the majority of Sabbaticans incorporated travel in their plans.

Volunteer – Taking time to give back is a rewarding experience of a lifetime. Build an orphanage. Save the environment. Choose and experience that you believe in. Give all you have to it and you'll get even more back in return.

Learn – Whether you are learning a new language or getting your Masters, a study sabbatical enriches your experience and immerses you in the learning environment. Your learning pursuit can be related to work or something completely different that inspires you.

Create – Pursuing a creative project can fulfil a lifelong dream. Write a book. Paint your masterpiece. Give yourself dedicated time to follow your passion. [Sandy](#) wrote 2 books while on sabbatical and is now writing another book where the protagonist is on sabbatical (and she's just signed a book deal with a huge publisher!).

What other types of breaks exist?

Career break - Usually lasts longer than a sabbatical, over 12 months. It generally represents a more permanent decision to not return to your job.

Gap year – a travel year commonly taken by students between school and university or between finishing university and their first job. I've also recently heard the term 'adult gap year' as another way of describing a longer sabbatical.

What a sabbatical isn't

The easiest way to describe the difference between a sabbatical and other forms of leave is that a sabbatical doesn't involve doctors. If you're taking a break and needing to interface with a medical professional for your own health or the health of someone else, you're not on a sabbatical. A sabbatical is not medical leave, not maternity leave. It's not burn out leave and it's not carers leave. These types of breaks are usually not allowing you to pursue your own self-directed interests. They are important forms of leave but they usually don't have the same recharging qualities of a sabbatical.

Lyndall's Story – Founder of Beyond a Break



I still remember the day I first came across the word sabbatical. I was standing at the coffee machine at work, listening to a colleague Darren, talk about taking his first sabbatical to travel around South East Asia. Up until that moment, I thought a sabbatical was just something that academics did. I had no idea it was enshrined in our employment policy. Darren explained that after five years of work, I could take six months unpaid leave and they'd hold my job open for me. At the time, it was exactly what I needed with a messy break up behind me and with some big career decisions looming.

It was a while before I realised that while I hadn't been calling it a sabbatical, I'd been taking extended breaks from work to travel and recharge since I was 20. Pushing forward with something new every time I returned. I counted it up.... I'd done that seven times. Now, a few years down the track, I just celebrated sabbatical number 10! My sabbaticals been from 1 month to a year and I've arranged it with work in a different way every time – from paid time off to unpaid leave to delayed start dates for new jobs.

What is always constant with my sabbatical experiences is the transformative effect they have on my life once. By giving myself time away, I gain new perspective on where I'm at and where I want to go. I come back with the energy, motivation and confidence to take on what ever is next for me. Without my sabbaticals, I wouldn't be where I am or who I am today.



Why take a sabbatical?

There are some great benefits of sabbaticals that extend way beyond the time you're on sabbatical.

Health and wellbeing – A [study](#) showed 70% of people returning from a sabbatical report improvement in physical health and confidence.

Work/life balance – The same [study](#) also showed that after a sabbatical, 96% of people said it improved their work/life balance and 78% said they had better connections with their family.

Promotion and pay – [Research](#) shows people who take time off are more likely to be promoted or to receive a raise or bonus. No one likes a work martyr.

Life changing – My survey of the Beyond a Beak community showed that 77% of people were making significant or life-transforming changes following their sabbatical.

Sabbaticals are an amazing opportunity. I know it can seem like it's impossible and you don't know where to start. This is where this toolkit will help you. You'll be taken through every step towards a recharging and inspiring sabbatical. In fact, you've already just taken the first step!

Complete the reflection questions below to translate this into what a sabbatical means for you

Task – Complete the reflection questions

When was the last time you took an extended break from work? How recharging was it?

What have you always dreamed of doing, but never had the time for?

What would a sabbatical mean for your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing?

What are you telling yourself about how possible a sabbatical is for you? Is this true?



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