Maternity Leave made easy

The Quick Proposal Template for Requesting Time Off
Introduction

Do an online search for “maternity leave letter” and you’ll surface some skimpy samples with a few just-the-facts paragraphs. They announce the pregnancy and the dates of the planned absence, and that’s about it.

And that’s a problem. Why? Because you want a maternity leave that meets your needs, and what you and your baby need doesn’t fit in three short paragraphs.

There’s a better way, a strategic way, which includes using this proposal template. Far more than a letter, it’s a proactive proposal that weaves strategy with the leave terms you want. As a pregnant woman working in the United States, you need a strategy.

As you probably know, the United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that doesn’t mandate paid leave for mothers of newborns. As a result, maternity leave in the US is a mixed bag of pieced-together time off—usually not enough of it.

So securing the best terms possible—a longer leave, more paid time off, and a phased-back or flexible return to work—requires a solid strategy plus lots of preparation to carry it out. The result of that effort? More time with your baby.

Follow these three strategic steps on your path to more mother-and-baby time:
1. Start your maternity leave planning early, during your first trimester.
2. Present a written maternity leave proposal during your third trimester.
3. Negotiate leave terms that surpass the policy, whether there is one or not.

All three steps are detailed in Max Your Maternity Leave, a complete negotiation guide with specific how-to advice for getting the leave terms you need and want.

But you can get started on step #2 right now.

This template, a free excerpt of the Max Your Maternity Leave negotiation guide, makes it easy to draft a proposal detailing your maternity leave plan, not the paltry default one. Use it as both a tool and as inspiration to craft the maternity leave terms you want.
About the Author

Pat Katepoo is the founder of WorkOptions.com—online since 1997—where she equips working mothers and others to negotiate flexible work and longer maternity leaves. Customers from more than 35 countries have used her Flexible Work Proposal Packages. Since 2003, thousands of women in the US have used Max Your Maternity Leave to get more time off with their baby.

What’s the Difference?

Throughout this document, you’ll find several references to Max Your Maternity Leave, the complete guide for negotiating more time off than your employer’s plan provides. What’s the difference between this document and Max, which is close to 50 pages?

Let me put it this way: if this document is the crib, Max Your Maternity Leave is the crib, mattress, changing table, dresser, rocking chair, and baby monitor.

With the complete Max Your Maternity Leave, you get all the strategies and scripts (exactly what to say) for getting approval of Supplemental Leave; three flexible ways to make the transition back to work easier and more affordable; paternity leave options for dads; techniques for asking for what you want with confidence; and more.

So while the proposal template below is a useful resource on its own, its effectiveness is expanded and multiplied by the entire contents found in Max Your Maternity Leave.

Learn more about Max Your Maternity Leave at WorkOptions.com.
Your Maternity Leave Proposal Template

The [brackets] contain instructional notes, optional words or phrases to use, and places to fill in the blanks. Following the template, you’ll find tactical tips and strategic advice.

To customize your proposal, copy and paste the text below into a word document, then edit. Or use the plain, easy-edit .doc version included with Max Your Maternity Leave.

MATERNITY LEAVE PLAN
for [YOUR NAME]

[date]

INTRODUCTION

Having invested [#] years’ in building my career, the work I do at [employer name] is important to me. I’ve given a lot of time and thought to how my job responsibilities can be managed [distributed] during the period [that I require] away from the office. Below is a proposed plan for work coverage, length of leave, accessibility during leave, and my return to work.

This plan is designed around my estimated leave date of [date], which closely corresponds with my estimated delivery date. If that date changes, other dates in the plan will need to be adjusted accordingly.

WORK PROGRESS

Work projects I plan to complete before the estimated start date of my leave:

- [Project 1; describe outcome and payoff to your manager and employer]
- [Project 2; describe outcome and payoff to your manager and employer]
- [Project 3; describe outcome and payoff to your manager and employer]

* If you’re relatively new to the workforce, add in your years of schooling: “Having invested [#] in training and building my career...”
WORK COVERAGE

Having the advantage of a planned absence, here are my suggestions for managing major projects and reassigning my high-priority work responsibilities:

[Be sensitive to your manager’s current agenda, objectives and deadlines. Identify your high-priority duties and offer creative solutions for reassigning them in this crucial section of your proposal.]

- [Project Name or Work Responsibility and your brief narrative.]
- [Project Name or Work Responsibility and your brief narrative.]
- [And so on, for each major project and high-priority work responsibility.]

I trust you’ll agree that these arrangements are adequate until my return. I welcome your assistance in shaping the details. [This takes a bold “assume the sale” approach. In any negotiation, confidence is convincing.]

PLANNED WEEKS OF LEAVE

The work coverage plan outlined above covers a leave of [#] weeks. This includes a combination of my projected accrued paid leave time under [employer name]’s vacation, sick, [personal], and [maternity leave] policies; [partially-]paid short-term disability leave; [FMLA leave]; and supplemental leave.

ACCESSIBILITY DURING LEAVE

Due to the nature of my leave, I’ll be unavailable to respond to business emails. However, I will call you and [names of other key people] the week of [date; suggest no sooner than six weeks after delivery] to discuss [status of specific projects; general updates of job-related issues]. After that date, I expect to be able to accept and respond to occasional emails related to [specific, high-priority work]. [Email gives you more control of your environment and greater flexibility in timing than telephone calls.]

After [date], I plan to...[After eight weeks, and the longer you are away, gradually increase accessibility in a defined way that continues to guard your boundaries.]
RETURN TO WORK: TRANSITION PHASE

[This optional section has you returning to work gradually. Refer to “Return to Work: Transition Phase” found in Max Your Maternity Leave to select the scenario that best matches your circumstances. Insert its corresponding narrative here.]

RETURN TO WORK: LONG-TERM PLAN

I plan to resume my regular, full-time schedule on [date]. OR [If you already know that you want a certain flexible work arrangement upon your return from maternity leave, introduce your plan here. For example, if you want a telecommuting arrangement, here is suggested wording:]  

I plan to resume my full-time schedule on [date]. However, I propose a mutually-beneficial [and cost-saving] approach to retaining my training and experience that will also increase my on-the-job [select: productivity; concentration; energy; loyalty; efficiency; creativity]. Attached is a separate document* outlining a plan for restructuring my current full-time position as [job title] into an equally [more] productive telecommuting arrangement on [#] days each workweek.

SUMMARY

I intend to continue being a vital part of [department or work unit] at [employer] [for years to come]. For the period of my planned absence, I offer this comprehensive proposal which considers both employee and employer needs. I’m prepared to discuss concerns that might not have been addressed, as well as more specifics of the plan. [End of proposal]

*You can download affordable proposal packages for telecommuting, job sharing, compressed workweek, and part-time work arrangements at WorkOptions.com.

Each One Reach One: Share This Proposal
You probably have a pregnant friend, co-worker or cousin who needs to know about this proactive proposal. Why not send it to her as an attachment right now. Or post the download link on Facebook. She’ll be thankful you did.
Sample Strategies That Support Your Proposal

Each section of the proposal above is carefully structured to favorably position your request and to prime the approval of your manager. The proposal is complemented by the negotiation strategies found in Max Your Maternity Leave. Here is a small sample.

WORK COVERAGE: While your manager is ultimately responsible for reassigning your work during your maternity leave, presenting this proposal shows you are taking a proactive, collaborative approach. In this section, you’re delivering problem-solving ideas with a positive tone. That makes the process easier for your manager, fostering a successful outcome to your negotiations.

Max Your Maternity Leave supplies you with nine Work Coverage ideas and their corresponding scripts to select and insert into your proposal.

PLANNED WEEKS OF LEAVE: Notice that this section is strategically placed after the Work Coverage section of your proposal. Because you’ve already presented the solutions for how your work will get done during your absence, your length of time away is less of an issue.

Baseline Maternity Leave + Supplemental Leave = your total weeks off. Notice how “supplemental leave” is simply and forthrightly listed as a component of the total weeks requested under Planned Weeks of Leave. However, if your manager probes for details, be prepared to distinguish your weeks of Baseline Maternity Leave.

Baseline Maternity Leave and Supplemental Leave are fully explained in Max Your Maternity Leave, but for now, here’s a quick overview.

Baseline Maternity Leave is what I’ve labeled the number of weeks that you are entitled to by law, employer policy, or both. This number is based on several variables so a woman’s baseline number might range from zero (yes, 0!) to 12 or more weeks. Max Your Maternity Leave directs you to step-by-step guidance to determine your Baseline Maternity Leave for you and your work situation. Download it now.
**Supplemental Leave** is what I’ve labeled the number of weeks that you’re requesting beyond your Baseline Maternity Leave. It’s the *key* to extending your time off because it sets the stage for you to negotiate for more than what your employer provides, in both time and pay. For specifics, refer to “How to Negotiate Supplemental Leave” found in *Max Your Maternity Leave*.

**RETURN TO WORK: TRANSITION PHASE:** If your employer doesn’t offer a phase-back-to-work plan, you can do it anyway. *Max Your Maternity Leave* outlines three work-time-budget scenarios common to many working women. Simply pick your matching scenario to propose an affordable plan to gradually return to work.

*This is the end of the free excerpt. If you want the complete ebook with strategies for more time off, some with partial or full pay, upgrade to Max Your Maternity Leave.*

**Your Baby + Your Time Off = Priceless**

The earlier you develop your plan, the more likely you’ll get more time and pay during your maternity leave.

Click here to get your copy of Max Your Maternity Leave now.