

Out of Office Checklist

Whether you're out of the office for a meeting, travel or other change to your schedule, our checklist will help you stay productive as you speed through each item before you leave and when you return.



Before leaving the office

Set up your email's automatic response

Automated responses are more productive—for you and your colleagues—when you include the dates you're away from the office, alternative contacts and how often you'll be able to check email.

Update your voicemail message

Include the dates you're out of the office, alternative contacts and how often you'll be able to check your messages. If you're taking calls during your travel, set your office phone to forward calls to your cell phone or the temporary number where you can be reached.

Update your calendar

Schedule your time away as an Out of Office appointment so that colleagues who are scheduling meetings will be able to see you're not on site.

Plan for your return

Depending on the duration of your time away, you'll be playing catch-up when you return. Schedule some time on your calendar, on the day you return, for catching up. Do it now, before your calendar is booked solid.

Make space in your email

The longer you're away, the more likely your inbox will fill up—or worst case—stop receiving messages. Clean it up before you leave to maximize space. Start with emails with attachments and those with the oldest Received dates. Save messages to Personal Folders, which (for Outlook) are stored on your PC, not the mail server. Delete Sent Items and finally, remove Deleted Items.

Copy your travel itinerary

If an emergency or urgent business matter occurs while you're away from the office, it's much more efficient if your associates can reach you quickly. Provide a copy of your travel itinerary to your assistant or colleague(s).

Turn off electronics

If you're leaving the office for more than a few hours, turn off or unplug equipment to conserve energy while you're away.

Cache your receipts

It's easy to lose track of receipts as you travel. Decide on a specific place where you will collect them all, perhaps a side pocket in one of your

bags. If you don't receive a receipt, make a note of the purchase while it's still fresh in your memory and add it to your receipt cache.

Pack/Dress for screening

For airline travel, refer to the Transportation Security Administration website (www.tsa.gov) for the latest advice, but in general pack liquids in checked baggage and keep your carry-ons clutter free so they're easier to screen. And dress for screening. For example, wear slip-on shoes instead of laced ones. The faster the screening goes, the faster you'll be on your way.

Copy important documents

File of copy of important documents like your passport, visa and driver's license in a secure place accessible by someone you trust. If lost or stolen during your trip, a copy will make replacement a little easier and save a lot of your time.

Cancel home services

Depending on your situation, remember to cancel services like mail delivery, newspaper subscriptions, trash collection, etc. at your home. And advise a trusted neighbor with good visibility of your residence the dates you'll be away.

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When you return...

Reinstate home services

Restart mail, newspapers, trash collection, etc. as necessary. Thank your neighbor for keeping an eye on your place while you were away.

Turn on electronics

On your return to the office, plug in and/or turn on any equipment that was idled while you were away.

Update your voicemail message

Change your voicemail back to your standard greeting. And check your messages if they've been accumulating during your absence.

Turn off your email's automated response

Before you get lost in the mountain or molehill of unread email, remember to turn off your email's automatic out-of-office message.

Make space in your email

If you've received any "Mailbox is full" messages look for recent attachments that may be filling up your inbox. It's always good idea to offload any large attachments the day you return to free up space.

Check your calendar

If you're back early, be sure to adjust the Out of Office notice on your calendar.

Plan for receipts

Filling out expense reports is easy to put off. Schedule some time on your calendar to tackle this task. If all of your receipts are together, the process will go much faster.



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