

Parental leave



What is parental leave?

Are you interested in spending as much time as possible with your family after the birth of your child? Do you want to take leave from your job or reduce your working hours? In Germany, this is not a problem. After a child is born, mothers and fathers are entitled to take time off from work, known as parental leave (Elternzeit). This allows you to devote yourself entirely to your family. During this period, an employer is not permitted to terminate your employment except in certain special cases (for example, if the company becomes insolvent or closes, or if you neglect your obligations). After returning from parental leave, mothers and fathers are entitled to the same working hours as before, as specified in their employment contracts. If you are interested in applying for parental leave, the local parental benefit office (*Elterngeldstelle*) will help you. The address can be found on the German-language website [familienportal.de](https://www.familienportal.de) 

Who is entitled to parental leave?

In Germany, any employed mother or father can apply for parental leave; i.e. the applicant must be an employee and have a German employment contract. This includes employees with temporary contracts, part-time contracts and marginal employment, and to trainees working in companies. After a trainee returns to work, training continues as before. However, before taking parental leave, trainees should find out from the chamber of commerce or educational authority responsible what rules apply to their subsequent return to work.

Workers are entitled to parental leave until their child reaches the age of three. School and university students, interns, the self-employed and the unemployed are not entitled to parental leave.

If both parents are employed, they may take parental leave either consecutively or simultaneously. It is important to note, however, that parental leave is available only to employed mothers and fathers who live in the same household as the child and are the main carers.

How long does parental leave last?

You can determine the length of your parental leave yourself. In most cases, it begins with the birth of the child (in the case of the father) or following maternity leave (in the case of the mother). In any event, you are entitled to parental leave until your child reaches the age of three. You may also have the option of saving up to 24 months of parental leave to be used before your child's eighth birthday. Such a transfer does not require the consent of the employer..

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With your employer's consent, you are allowed to work up to 30 hours per week while on parental leave. Under certain conditions you may even have a legal right to do so.

How and where should I apply for parental leave?

As a mother or father, you can divide the entire parental leave into three periods. If you want to take parental leave within the first three years of the child's life, you must notify your employer of the parental leave seven weeks before (the planned) start date.

For parental leave to be taken between the third birthday and the completion of the child's eighth year, the deadline is 13 weeks before the start. Your employer is required to issue a written confirmation of the length of your parental leave.

Information on the web

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)

Information on the statutory regulations of parental leave

Questions and answers on the new and more flexible regulations of parental leave

Federal Employment Agency (BA)

The Commissioners for equal opportunities on the labour market (BCA) answer questions about reconciling work and family life

<https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/family-reunification/parental-leave>

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