

A mother lode of strategies for working moms



Whether you are on maternity leave or already back at work, you may need some help juggling motherhood and career. You can prepare for those demands and lighten your load with some thoughtful planning. Give these helpful tips a try:

Go easy on yourself

New mothers often feel emotional conflicts when returning to work. Remind yourself that it's okay to work outside the home and that you can be a good mother, too. You're using your talents and skills and doing what works best for you and your family.

Get child care squared away

Even before the baby is born, do your research to find dependable child care. Make sure you feel comfortable with and can trust the services and caregivers provided by the child-care service.

Ask about work expectations

Talk to your boss about your job responsibilities so you can be clear about expectations when you return to work.

Make a date to return

Plan the best time to return to work based on your family's needs. If possible, go back to work on a Thursday or Friday so you can ease back into work with a shorter workweek.

Learn to juggle family and work responsibilities with balancing ideas on the next page.



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Off to work you go



Make lists

Jot down to-do lists for work and home or tasks for you and other family members. Prioritize what is urgent, what can wait and what can be removed from the list. Things you may have done before the baby came along may not actually be necessities.

Make contingency plans

Plan for backup child care ahead of time—before your baby or child is sick. You may need to call on a friend or loved one to help when your child is under the weather. That way, you can save some of your sick days from work for care of your child when you are more urgently needed.

Start the morning right

Pack school-age children's lunches and backpacks the night before. If you are a new mom, you can also make preparations ahead of time by gathering all items to ensure a well-packed diaper bag is ready for the caregiver. In the morning, shower and dress, then enjoy some quiet time alone before your kids wake up. Keep breakfast simple. If your kids are older, help them develop a plan to get ready for the day.

Stay involved

Keep in touch with your child's teacher or caregiver by phone and e-mail. Ask your caregiver to maintain a journal of your child's activities and milestones. If you can take time off from work, go on school field trips or volunteer in your child's classroom. Some volunteer work can be done at home. Try to see if you can plug in to those jobs.

Stick to a schedule

Follow a consistent routine each day so you and your children know what to expect. And try not to do everything yourself. Accept help from your spouse, loved ones and friends.

Care for yourself, too

Relax after the children are in bed by engaging in something that you enjoy, such as listening to music, reading or soaking in the tub. Keep your calendar clear of unnecessary activities and strive to get the right amount of sleep.