



## Summer Productivity: Planning Ahead For OOO Time

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With warmer weather and summer in full swing, staying productive and maintaining momentum at work can feel more challenging. Team members take time off, schedules change, and clients are harder to reach. Scheduling tools, automated messages, and out-of-office planning can help teams stay organized and work consistent.

### Staying Consistent with Scheduling Tools

Scheduling tools help you stay ahead of tasks and plan for time out of the office. Features in Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Tasks, and Planner help you prepare so you can enjoy your time off without disruptions. They also support better team communication by allowing you to plan messages without interrupting a coworker or manager's time off.

**Schedule messages in Microsoft Teams** to keep communication on track. You can prepare updates, reminders, or announcements in advance and choose when they send. After drafting your message, select the plus icon, then choose Schedule message to pick the delivery date and time.

**Delay email delivery in Outlook** to stay consistent even when you're

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### Caretakers of Your Productivity.

"For I am the Lord your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy."

Leviticus 11:44

out of the office. This is especially helpful for routine or follow up messages. Click the drop-down arrow next to the *Send* button to set a custom date and time.

**Use calendar reminders** to stay aligned with your team. Set reminders in Outlook or Teams for important deadlines or priorities to help work stays consistent when schedules change. When creating an event, enter the necessary details, then select the clock icon to set the desired reminder duration.

**Create recurring tasks** to maintain consistency. Use Outlook Tasks or Microsoft Planner to manage ongoing responsibilities. In Outlook, select the *To Do* tab then click the repetition arrow to set the preferred duration. In Planner, open a task and choose a recurring setting that fits your schedule.

## Using Automated Replies Effectively

Automated replies in Microsoft Teams and Outlook are a simple way to let others know you're away, that responses may be delayed, and who to contact if needed. Setting them up ahead of time helps maintain clear communication while you're out of the office.

### Automated Replies in Outlook

To set up automated replies in Outlook, navigate to *Settings* in the upper right corner. From there, select the *Accounts Tab* if it's not automatically selected. Then, select *Automatic replies*, toggle them on, and create an email to send to internal and external recipients.

Be sure to set a start and end date and time so replies automatically stop when you return.

Automated replies can be customized to fit your situation. The examples below provide simple templates you can edit and use as needed. Clear, professional wording helps set expectations and maintain strong communication.

#### Email Template Option 1

Hi,

I appreciate you reaching out.

I'll be on vacation June 15th - June 19th and will respond as soon as I return.

Thank you for your patience.

Have a great day!

Kindly,  
Your Name

#### Email Template Option 2

I'll be out of the office July 10th – July 17th for a family vacation. If you need assistance while I'm away, please contact my manager, Name, at name@company.com.

I look forward to chatting with you when I return.

Thank you,  
Your Name

## Automated Replies in Teams

Microsoft Teams also allows you to schedule automated out of office replies, so coworkers and external contacts know when you're unavailable.

In Teams, select the three dots in the upper right corner, go to *Settings*, then select *General*. Scroll to the *Out of Office* section and choose *Schedule*.

From there, turn on automatic replies to type out your message. Then, you can choose the recipients, such as internal users, external users, or specific contacts. Be sure to select *Send replies only during a time period* to set a start and end date and time.

You can also access these settings by clicking your profile picture, selecting *Set status message*, and choosing *Schedule out of office*.

Because Teams is designed for quick communication, out-of-office messages are most effective when they're short and concise. The templates below provide examples that are customizable to your needs.

### Teams Message Template Option 1

OOO 06/09 - 06/11.

### Teams Message Template Option 2

On vacation from June 15th to June 19th. I'll respond when I return. Thank you!

## Planning Ahead Before You're Out of Office

Before taking time off, it's important to communicate tasks, responsibilities, and plans with the appropriate team members and complete any high-priority items before you leave.

**Here are a few practical ways to plan ahead before you're out of the office:**

**Notify the appropriate people in advance**, including management, colleagues, and clients, regarding your upcoming time off to set clear expectations.

**Delegate responsibilities** by identifying tasks that need coverage and assigning them to the correct team members. Document important notes, timelines, and statuses so work can continue seamlessly while you're away.

**Wrap up important tasks** so you can enjoy your time off with peace of mind and return with a fresh start.

It also helps to plan for when you return, so you're not overwhelmed by a to-do list. Start by organizing your tasks by priority to focus on what needs attention first. Then, consider blocking time on your calendar to answer emails, prioritize tasks, and respond to urgent requests. From there, share the plan with your team to set expectations around your availability so they know when to reach out.

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By knowing how to effectively use scheduling tools, create automated responses, and plan ahead for time off, you can enjoy the summer months and stay productive. □

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# STAFF Q&A

## What's a hobby you're passionate about?



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"I love baking cookies and cakes! I also recently discovered diamond painting. It's like painting by number but you have faceted resin pieces that sparkle like diamonds. It's very relaxing!"



**LAINY**

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"Ballroom dancing is my sanctuary. It challenges me to grow in confidence and grace while letting me express emotions that words can't capture."