



LEAVE LIKE A BOSS

Mastering the *Art* of the Parental Leave Out-of-Office Message



Introduction

YOU MAY BE ASKING YOURSELF: IS IT POSSIBLE TO OVERTHINK A PARENTAL LEAVE OUT OF OFFICE (OOO) MESSAGE? WE THINK NOT!

And here's why.

A well crafted OOO message can be a savvy strategic move for career-driven parents. It's a brand building technique that can leave a strong impression on the reader. In addition – and this is important for all you people leaders out there – it becomes a part of the leadership shadow you cast. In other words, your OOO signals to others what's okay, what's not, and how a good one is written.

Follow this step-by-step guide to create an out of office response that's not only informative, but also fun and authentic to you. Here we go!

(Or not - and you can skip to the [TL/DR](#) 😊)



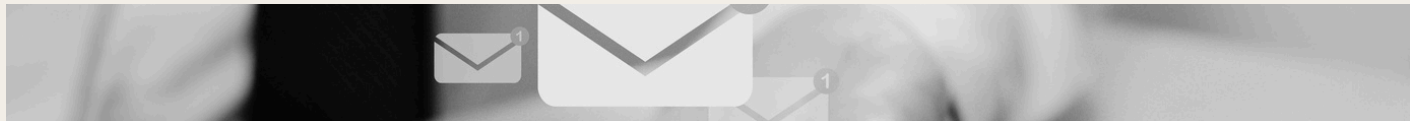
Step 1: Salutation

A GOOD OPENER CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.

Here are some options to consider:

- **Keep it profesh.** A simple “Hello, thank you for your message,” “Hi there,” or “Greetings” are all good alternatives.
- **Give it a kick.** We’ve seen some fun ones at Josie. “Greetings from Diaper Land!”, “Hello from the Crib Side!”, and “Hi there from the world of sippy cups and storybooks” are some of our favorites. Go ahead and let your creative juices flow.
- **Skip it:** It is totally okay to just get to the point – after all, for many of us, less is more. Don’t feel obligated to be overly polite. Remember, authenticity here is key!

GIVE IT A TRY: WRITE DOWN A FEW POTENTIAL OPENERS BELOW.



Step 2: Reason for Absence & Timeframe

WE RECOMMEND KEEPING THIS SIMPLE, AND DIRECT.

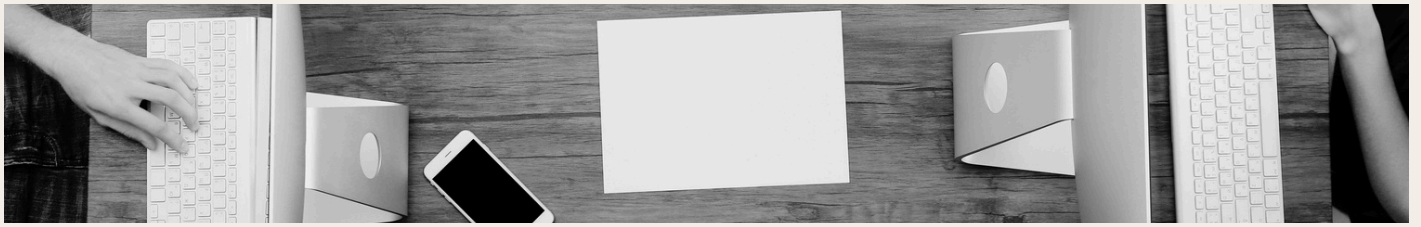
After all, people do need to know why you're out and for what duration – and if you complicate it too much, things can get confusing!

Try something like: “I am currently out of office on parental leave, with an expected return date of XXXX.”

Two things to note:

- When you specify the type of leave, try using “parental” rather than “maternity” or “paternity.” By using the “parental” language, you are signaling that it’s more than okay – and increasingly common – for both birthing and non-birthing parents to take some form of leave.
- Lots of things can happen as you approach your return date. Perhaps you had a medical challenge that will prolong your leave, or you and your manager are able to work out a more flexible schedule for the first month back. Try adding the word “expected” or “anticipated” before the return date to signal that there may be a need for flexibility.

GIVE IT A TRY: WRITE DOWN YOUR REASON FOR ABSENCE AND EXPECTED RETURN BELOW.



Step 3: Your Alternates

PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE CONTACT PERSONS FOR VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES YOU CURRENTLY HOLD.

For some, this may just be one person who can triage messages on your behalf. For others, you may need to put down multiple names (especially if you have multiple clients / customers to manage while you are out) or a general inbox.

One thing to note here – and this is NOT for everyone – if you are open to being contacted for specific matters, you can add that here as well. Trust us – even we are conflicted as we type this out, but as our Josie mental health coaches have always said – you need to do whatever feels right for you. So, what does that mean?

That means if there is a project you worked so, so hard on and you find yourself feeling anxious not being in the know – then perhaps it’s okay to get updates on a limited basis. Work out in advance the how, when, and how often you would want to receive those updates.

For example: “For urgent matters regarding the [ABC account/project/client], please text me at XXX.”

GIVE IT A TRY: WHO WILL BE YOUR STAND-IN WHILE YOU ARE AWAY, AND FOR WHICH RESPONSIBILITIES?



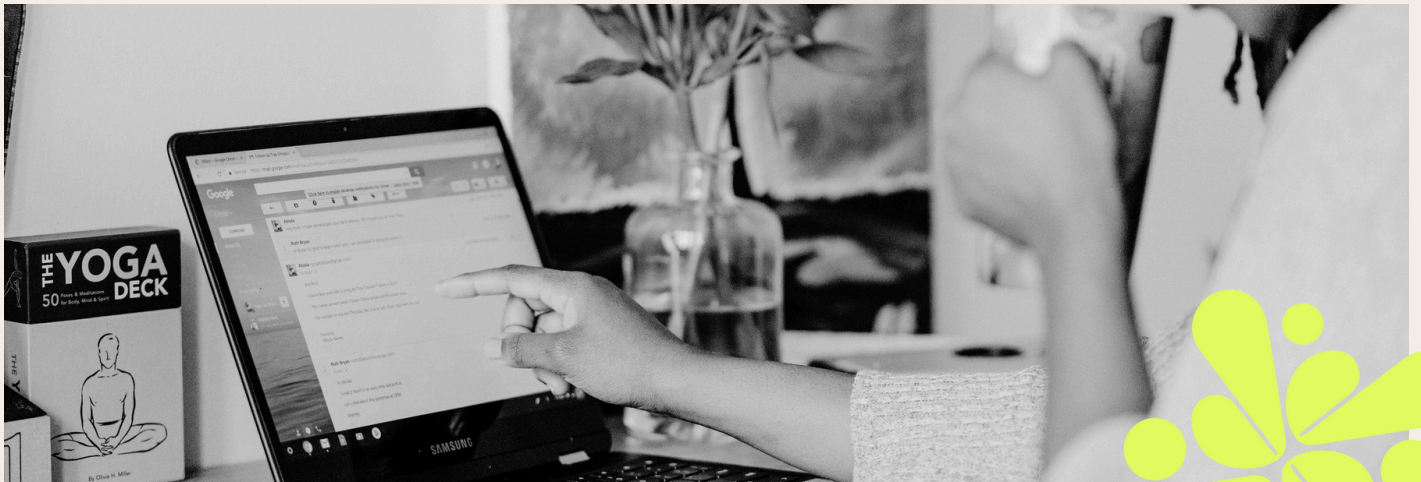
Step 4: Closing

SIMILAR TO YOUR SALUTATION, YOU CAN EITHER KEEP THIS PROFESH OR BUILD IN A BIT OF PERSONALITY.

What you write often can signal your values as well. Here are a few examples:

- “Our daughter [NAME] says thank you to my colleagues who are covering for me while I’m out, and she is grateful for this special time we can spend together!”
- “I am really appreciative of having this time with our growing family. Thank you, [EMPLOYER]!”

GIVE IT A TRY: HOW WILL YOU WRAP-UP YOUR MESSAGE?



Sample Out-of-Office Messages

SAMPLE 1 : KEEP-IT-SIMPLE-DON'T-OVER-EXPLAIN EDITION

Thank you for your message. We welcomed our daughter Amelia to the world on April 3, 2018.

I am currently out of the office on parental leave, with an expected return date of July 31, 2018. For urgent matters, please contact [insert superhero colleague's email].

Otherwise, I will respond upon my return.

Best,
[Your name]



Sample Out-of-Office Messages

SAMPLE 2:

I'M-GONNA-LET-IT-SHINE EDITION

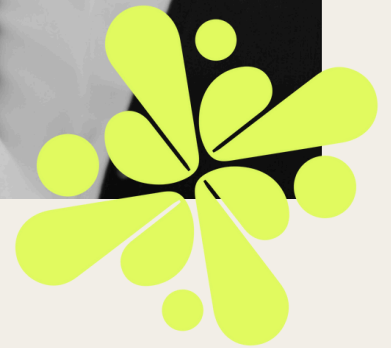
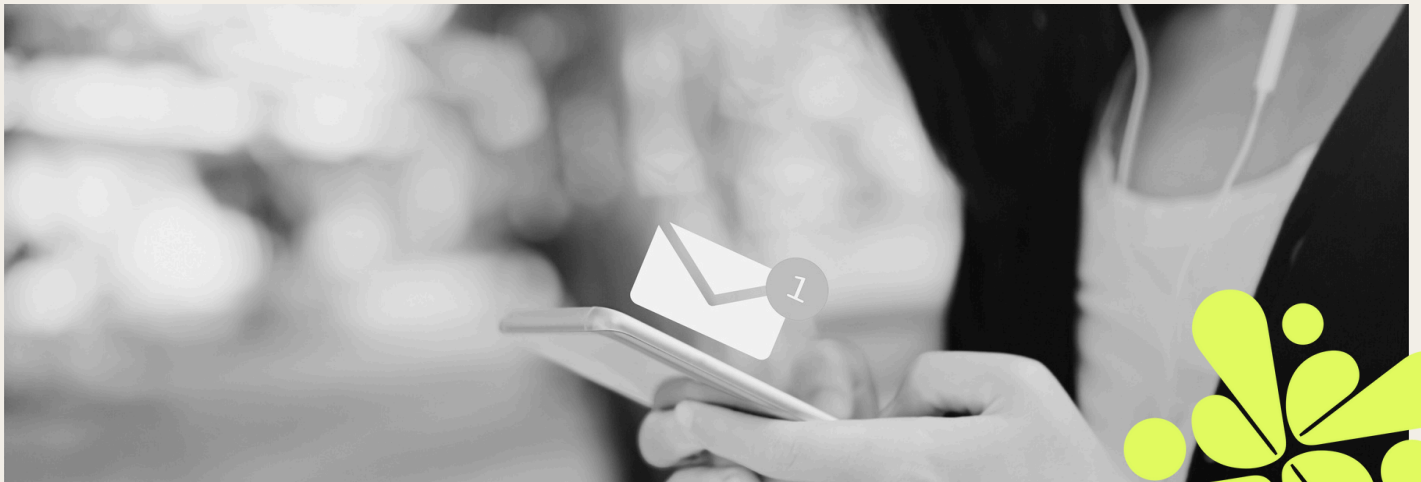
Greetings from the land of lullabies and diapers!

I am currently on parental leave and trading my keyboard for a baby monitor as I embark on the wild adventure of new parenthood. My expected return date is October 31, 2022. Until then, please contact the following for urgent needs regarding:

- Families ERG: [insert colleague name, email address]
- ABC Account: [insert colleague name, email address]
- General questions: [insert colleague name, email address]

For everything else, I will respond upon my return. Baby Amelia says ‘thank you [company name] for letting me spend this time with [mama/papa].

Best,
[Your Name]



Putting It All Together

COMBINE YOUR ANSWERS UP TOP AND SEE YOUR 000 COME TOGETHER
HERE :





The Wrap Up

AS YOU SIT BACK AND REVIEW YOUR AWESOMELY CRAFTED MESSAGE, TAKE ONE LAST MOMENT TO ENSURE IT REFLECTS YOU, YOUR VALUES, AND YOUR COMPANY'S CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS.

If you're the type who always goes for the extra credit, you may even want to revisit your company's overall value statements, and build that language into your message. For example, one Josie client wove-in her company's value of "Root for Each Other" and mentioned this language in her message ("I'm grateful to XXX company and my colleagues who are rooting for me as I make this transition.").

Now that you've done your homework, it's time to turn it in!

When it comes to timing, we suggest having your OOO ready-to-go 4 – 5 weeks prior to your due date. This will mean less of a scramble as you get closer to baby's big debut. If you need to change any details after baby arrives, that's totally fine – just make sure you won't be locked out of your accounts for any reason and have an HR point of contact handy for any tech questions.

Another final consideration: create a personal "OOO" as well. For example, Gmail can also send automated responses. Sometimes a little reminder to folks that you've got your hands full can go a long way in giving you peace of mind when you're unable to answer all those messages as quickly as you used to 😊

By following these guidelines and infusing your personality into your parental leave out of office message, you'll create a memorable and informative response that keeps your professional life on track while you tackle parenthood like a pro!



The TL/DR

- The key to a good OOO is authenticity. Bring a bit of personality into it.
- If you are a people leader, keep in mind that an OOO is more than a message. It's part of the leadership shadow you cast.
- Don't feel the need to over explain or be overly polite.
- Try "parental leave" instead of "maternity" or "paternity leave". This indirectly signals that it's okay for both birthing and non-birthing parents to take leave.
- Use the words "expected" or "anticipated" before your return date, allowing some room for flexibility.
- Don't be afraid to build in a little humor.
- Extra credit: use language aligned with your company's values.
- Prep your OOO ~4 - 6 weeks prior to your baby's expected due date
- You can create different OOO messages for internal vs. external communications.
- Consider creating an OOO for your personal email accounts as well. It's a friendly reminder for grandma/pa who may send you 125 articles after baby is born 😊

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Get in touch with team Josie:



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