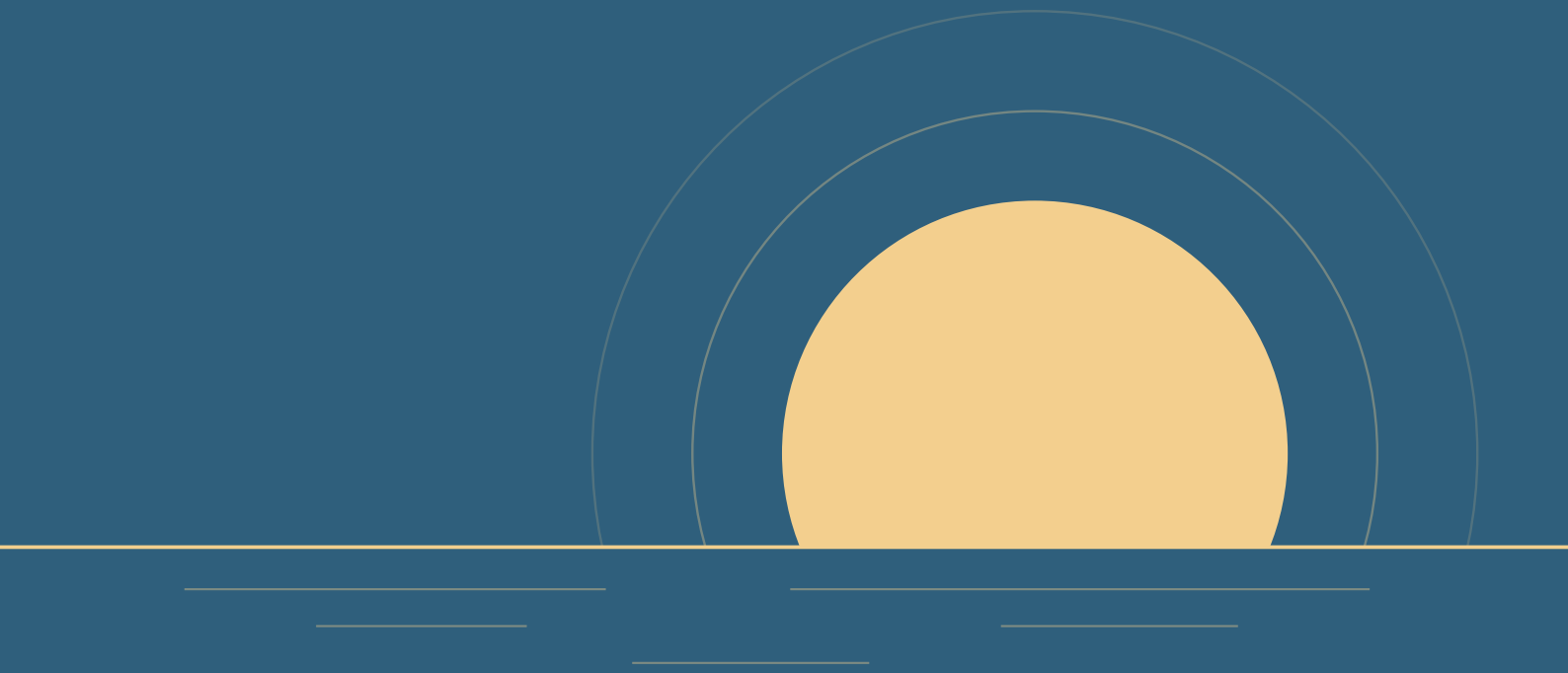
Mamavela

Back to Work After Baby

Plan your return with your rights in hand: the timeline, the conversation with your manager, pumping at work, childcare and the first weeks back.



Free sample

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Contents

Welcome: a return you prepare, not one that happens to you 3

What this book is, and what it is not 3

How to use this book 4

Chapter 1. The 12-week countdown 5

After the first month: the rest of the first year 5

Welcome: a return you prepare, not one that happens to you

The end of parental leave arrives faster than anyone expects. One week you are learning your baby's cries; a few months later you are choosing childcare, wondering what your manager will say about pumping, and lying awake at 3 a.m. composing emails in your head.

A systematic review of 52 studies on returning to work after maternity leave (Franzoi and colleagues, Archives of Women's Mental Health, 2024) describes this moment as "a particularly critical time in women's personal and occupational life". It found that women's mental and physical health "seem connected to a longer maternity leave and a greater coworkers' and supervisors' support", and that returning to work "seems to constitute one of the most important barriers" to continuing breastfeeding. In other words: the way the return is organised matters, and much of it can be prepared.

This book helps you prepare it. It gives you:

- **a 12-week countdown**, from the last weeks of leave to the end of the first month back;
- **your rights, as they stood on 21 October 2026**, in the United States and the United Kingdom, quoted from the official sources (US Department of Labor, EEOC, GOV.UK, the Health and Safety Executive, Acas);
- **the practical side of feeding** when you are away from your baby, including pumping at work and milk storage times from the CDC;
- **scripts and letter templates** for the conversations that worry parents most;
- **printable pages**: countdown checklist, pumping log, handover sheet for the childcare provider, first-week plan.

What this book is, and what it is not

It is information, not legal or medical advice. Employment rights depend on your country, your state, your contract and sometimes the size of your employer. Where that is the case, this book says so and tells you where to check. It contains no medicine doses and makes no promises about how your employer will respond. For an individual legal question, contact the agencies named in Chapter 11 or an employment adviser.

> **Rules change.**
>
> Every right in this book was checked on official websites on 21 October 2026. Before you rely on a rule, open the official page named in the text.

How to use this book

- **More than three months before your return?** Start with Chapter 1 (the countdown) and Chapter 4 (deciding how to return).
- **Your return is in a few weeks?** Chapters 5 (the conversation), 6 (childcare) and 7 (feeding).
- **Back at work already?** Chapters 8 and 9, and Chapter 11 if something is going wrong.
- **Partners:** Chapter 10 is for you, but every chapter applies to any parent returning to work.

Chapter 1. The 12-week countdown

This countdown assumes you know your return date. Adapt the weeks to your own timeline.

When	What to do
12 weeks before	Confirm your return date and your rights (Chapter 2 or 3). Decide what kind of return you want (Chapter 4). Start the childcare search if it is not done (Chapter 6).
10 weeks before	If you want to change your hours or pattern, prepare your request (Chapter 5). In the UK, a flexible working request can take time to be decided.
8 weeks before	In the UK, this is the minimum notice if you want to change your return date. Contact your manager to plan a first conversation. Consider keeping in touch days (UK).
6 weeks before	If you will express milk at work, start learning to use your pump and building a small store (Chapter 7). Ask HR about the lactation space.
4 weeks before	Settling-in at childcare begins, or is booked (Chapter 6). Practise the morning routine once or twice.
2 weeks before	Prepare your work bag and pumping kit. Ask for a handover of what changed at work. Plan the first week (Chapter 8).
1 week before	Do a full "dress rehearsal" day: childcare drop-off, commute, a few hours away. Batch cook. Rest.
Week 1 back	Shorter hours if agreed; pumping schedule; check in with yourself each evening.
Weeks 2 to 4 back	Review: what works, what does not. Adjust with your manager, your childcare and your partner.

After the first month: the rest of the first year

The return is not a single day; it is a process that lasts months. These checkpoints help you adjust as your baby grows.

Around	What may change	What to review
1 month back	Routines settle; first illnesses at childcare	Sick-day plan, pumping schedule, workload
3 months back	Your baby's sleep and feeding change again	Night rota, objectives with your manager
When your baby starts solids (around 6 months, WHO and NHS)	Fewer milk feeds during the day for many babies	Pumping sessions, what the setting provides
Your baby's first birthday	In the US, the PUMP Act's one-year period ends; in France, the breastfeeding hour ends	Any flexible arrangement on trial; your career goals

Write your next review dates in your calendar now, so that they happen even in the busiest weeks.

My countdown dates

Return date:

Date to give notice of any change:

Childcare settling-in starts:

First conversation with my manager:

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already feel useful, and that you can see how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, pages to fill in, sources you can check.

The full book has 38 pages.

Get it here: https://mamavela.com/

One-time payment, instant PDF.