

17. The Proper Way to Resign

Once a new job has been accepted, you need to consider is the timing of your resignation. Since two weeks' notice is considered the norm, make sure your resignation properly coincides with your start date at the new company.

Try to avoid an extended start date. Even if your new job begins in 10 weeks, don't give 10 weeks' notice; wait eight weeks and then give two weeks' notice. This way, you'll protect yourself from disaster, in the unlikely event your new company announces a hiring freeze a month before you come on board. By staying at your old job for only two weeks after you've announced your resignation, you won't be subjected to the envy, scorn, or feelings of professional impotence that may result from your new role as a lame-duck employee.

Some companies will make your exit plans for you. I know a candidate whose employer had the security guard escort him out of the building the moment he announced his intention to go to work for a direct competitor.

Your resignation should be handled in person, preferably on a Friday afternoon. Ask your direct supervisor if you can speak with him privately in his office. When you announce your intention to resign, you should also hand your supervisor a letter which states your last date of employment with the company. Let him know that you've enjoyed working with him, but that an opportunity came along that you couldn't pass up, and that your decision to leave was made carefully, and doesn't reflect any negative feelings you have toward the company or the staff.

You should also add that your decision is final, and that you would prefer not to be made a counteroffer, since you wouldn't want your refusal to accept more money to appear as a personal affront. Let your supervisor know that you appreciate all the company's done for you; and that you'll do everything in your power to make your departure as smooth and painless as possible.

Finally, ask if there's anything you can do during the transition period over the next two weeks, such as help train your successor, tie up loose ends, or delegate tasks.

Keep your resignation letter short, simple, and to the point. There's no need to go into detail about your new job, or what led to your decision to leave. If these issues are important to your old employer, he'll schedule an exit interview for you, at which time you can hash out your differences ad infinitum. Be sure to provide a carbon copy or photocopy of your resignation letter for your company's personnel file. This way, the circumstances surrounding your resignation will be well documented for future reference.