

Alternative Work Schedules: What Do the Terms Mean?

The past few decades have seen a number of changes in the workplace including optional work schedules. The result is confusion, until the definitions are understood.

Here are some of the terms and the conditions of work associated with them.

Normal, Full-Time Work

This generally involves a five-day work week, with seven to eight hours spent on the job each day. Employers in a city or area tend to maintain similar work days. In New York City, for example, it is often 9 to 12 and 1 to 5. In other places it may be 8 to 12 and 1 to 5.

Flextime

Employees elect the hours they wish to work—picking, say from 7 am to 7 pm. However, they must all work during the basic core period, such as 10 am to 3 pm, to allow for meetings or other interaction.

Telecommuting

Work done at a location other than the main work site, often from an employee's home or a satellite or branch office. Telecommuting involves linking the employee commuting time and may save on office rent for an employer.

Shared Job

Two or more employees may share a single full-time job. Often each works two and a half days a week or either mornings or afternoons. Sometimes two employees will decide they wish to split a job and approach the employer with that suggestion

Temporary

This involves something other than a permanent job and may last from one day to months. Temporary workers are recruited via a temp service agency or they may be hired directly by the employer with the understanding that the job is not permanent.

Flexible Week

This involves a change in the number of days worked per week. In the most common pattern, employees work four days per week, ten hours per day. In some cases, they may work nine hours a day for nine days and get one day off every two weeks.

Part-time

A reduced work schedule for fewer hours than the normal, full-time job. Some employees may work at more than one part-time job. In other cases, persons with a full-time job may take another position on a part-time basis.

Other

There are other options, generally a combination of some of the above. An example is a part-time, telecommuting position