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Elternzeit — Parental Leave in Germany

Elternzeit is paid parental leave in Germany allowing parents to take up to 3 years off work per child, with flexible sharing options between parents and job protection guaranteed by law.

Deutsche Begriffe: Elternzeit | Erziehungsurlaub | Teilzeit | Kündigungsschutz

Elternzeit — Parental Leave

What is it?

Elternzeit is **unpaid leave** from work to care for a child. Your employer **MUST** grant it to you.

How long does it last?

- **Up to 3 years** per child
- Can be used until the **child's 8th birthday**
- Can be divided between parents

How to divide it?

Examples:

- Mother 2 years + Father 1 year
- Mother 1 year + (break) + Mother 1 year when child is 5 years old
- Both at the same time (max 3 years together)

How to apply?

- 1. In writing** to your employer
- 2. Min. 7 weeks before** (first 3 years of child's life)
- 3. Min. 13 weeks before** (between 3-8 years of age)

What to include in the application:

- From when to when
- Whether you plan to work part-time (max 32 hours/week)

Protection from dismissal

☐ **Kündigungsschutz (dismissal protection):**

- From the moment you submit the application (max 8 weeks before)
- Throughout the entire Elternzeit period
- Up to 8 weeks after returning

What about money?

Elternzeit = **unpaid leave**.

BUT you can receive:

- **Elterngeld** (up to €1,800/month) — see article on Elterngeld
- **Kindergeld** (€255/month) — always

Work during Elternzeit

You can work up to **32 hours per week**:

- With the same employer
- With another employer (with permission)
- As a freelancer (with permission)

You will then receive ElterngeldPlus.

Important notes!

- Submit your application ON TIME — your employer cannot refuse, but you must meet the deadlines
- Health insurance: free during Elternzeit (familienversichert)
- Pension: Elternzeit counts toward your pension (Kindererziehungszeiten)

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