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Holiday Entitlement — Right to Vacation in Germany

In Germany, employees are entitled to a minimum of 20 working days annually (5-day week). Unused vacation (Resturlaub) must be taken by March 31st, and sick days during vacation can be reclaimed.

Deutsche Begriffe: Urlaubsanspruch | Urlaub | Erholungsurlaub | Resturlaub | Bundesurlaubsgesetz | Werktage | Urlaubsabgeltung | Krankschreibung | Hinweispflicht | Sonderurlaub | Zusatzurlaub | Elternzeit

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Urlaubsanspruch — Right to Vacation

How much vacation are you entitled to?

Statutory minimum (Bundesurlaubsgesetz §3): **24 working days** in a 6-day week = **20 days** in a 5-day week. In employment contracts and collective agreements typically 25–30 days.

Working days / week	Minimum vacation
5 days	20 days
4 days	16 days
3 days	12 days

People with a disability certificate get +5 days (Zusatzurlaub).

When can you take vacation?

• Full entitlement **after 6 months** of employment (Wartezeit)

• In the first 6 months: 1/12 of annual vacation for each month worked

Resturlaub — Unused vacation

• As a rule, use it **by March 31** of the following year, otherwise it expires

• BUT: According to ECJ/BAG case law, the employer has a **Hinweispflicht** — they must notify you in time about remaining vacation. If they fail to do so, **vacation does not expire**

Illness during vacation

Got sick while on vacation? Get a **Krankschreibung** (medical certificate) — those days don't count as vacation and go back to your pool (§9 BUrlG). For longer illness, see Krankengeld.

Vacation and end of employment

• Leaving in the first half of the year: vacation is pro-rated

• Unused days → **payment of equivalent (Urlaubsabgeltung)**

Special situations

• **Minijob:** You have full vacation rights too (pro-rated to working days)

• **Elternzeit:** Employer may reduce vacation by 1/12 for each full month of parental leave

• **Urlaubsgeld** (vacation bonus) is voluntary — if you receive it, you'll see it on your payslip

• **Sonderurlaub** (wedding, birth, death of relative, moving): 1–2 days according to §616 BGB or collective agreement