

How to quit? Here's what experts say people should know during the Great Resignation

Kornfield, Meryl; Andrew Van Dam . The Washington Post (Online) , Washington, D.C.: WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post. Nov 17, 2021.

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FULL TEXT

In today's labor market, there are more people asking how to ask for a raise, how to handle burnout and increasingly how to quit.

In fact, searches about resigning are at a 10-year high, according to Google data provided to The Washington Post. Among the top 10 searches related to resigning, the majority are about the ins and outs of leaving a job.

The trending interest in quitting is no surprise amid the "Great Resignation," a wave of employees who've decided to leave their jobs. A record 4.4 million Americans quit their jobs in September, many in pursuit of more meaningful careers or better compensation. Others sought work-life balance after the coronavirus pandemic left people feeling burned out.

Health-care workers, strained by more than 20 months of the crisis, are quitting at their highest rates on record, according to Labor Department data going back to 2000. Lower-wage service workers have been heading for the exits at even higher rates. Workers in arts, entertainment and recreation are quitting at almost double their pre-pandemic level, a record for that group, and workers at hotels, restaurants and bars at quitting at the highest rate ever recorded for any industry for which comparable numbers are available.

A Post analysis of Labor Department data showed an unusually large and growing share of workers under age 25 were leaving their jobs, even before they had another one lined up.

With some workers feeling on edge, wondering how to leave their jobs, The Post talked to labor experts about this topic and asked for their advice. Here are four tips for how to resign:

1. Before even committing to resigning, there are a few things to reconsider.

Do you really need to resign?

Before departing your post, you may consider whether you need to resign to address the issue or issues that make you want to quit.

Employees may underestimate how flexible their bosses or workplaces could be to accommodate their needs, said Tami Simon, who advises companies as the global consulting business leader at Segal, a benefits and human resources consulting firm. Simon says employers she's worked with have tried to offer greater physical, mental and financial support to retain their workforce.

"At the end of the day, asking oneself not just what isn't making you happy but what would make you happy is a healthy exercise," Simon said.

Simon recommends digging your original offer letter out of the filing cabinet or inbox to remind yourself of your contractual obligations. Did you sign a noncompete agreement? Will you lose a bonus if you go?

She said workers should also look at their compensation agreements and benefits to make sure they know what they could be walking away from.

2. Consider how your boss will find out.

If you have decided to leave, don't tell your co-workers just yet.

Your manager should be the first to find out about your resignation to avoid bungling your relationship with the

workplace. Even if your boss is the reason you want to quit, providing the courtesy of first notice gives your employer the chance to figure out how the rest of the organization will find out –and improves your chance of getting a positive reference for prospective employers.

3. Your letter should be short and sweet.

Sometimes, less is more.

In a resignation letter, you are not required to tell your employer what you're doing after you leave the company or why you're moving on –simply your name, a sentence that you're resigning and your intended last day should suffice.

Airing grievances could backfire, warned J.T. O'Donnell, a former HR executive and CEO of Work It Daily, a career coaching service.

With people feeling frustrated with their pay and working conditions, some have expressed their dissatisfaction in less than professional ways as they have one foot out the door, said O'Donnell, who has over 1 million followers on her TikTok career coaching account.

Her viewers have shared stories of texting their resignations or ghosting their employers entirely. Stories of awkward resignations have become national headlines. In one viral instance, workers at a McDonald's in Nebraska shared their employment status on the marquee outside the restaurant: "WE ALL QUIT SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE."

But there could be ramifications. Prospective employers could call to ask questions, including if the prior workplace has written you off as someone they would rehire.

"Your reasons for leaving are personal but not unique," O'Donnell said. "Everyone who worked through the pandemic is feeling a level of anxiety and depression. There's a collective stuck going on."

4. Offer to stick around to help with the transition.

The age-old adage is to give two weeks' notice.

Depending on the level of your job, more time may be necessary to transition your successor effectively.

O'Donnell recommends having that conversation with your manager to figure out what time you can accommodate with your schedule. Offering extra help with the transition, including providing a document to guide your replacement, is one way to ensure you leave on a positive note.

"Take the high road," O'Donnell said. "Because reference checks will come back to get you, five, ten, fifteen years later."

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DETAILS

Subject:	Resignations; Employers; Employment; Pandemics
Business indexing term:	Subject: Resignations Employers Employment
Publication title:	The Washington Post (Online); Washington, D.C.
Publication year:	2021
Publication date:	Nov 17, 2021
Section:	Business

Publisher:	WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post
Place of publication:	Washington, D.C.
Country of publication:	United States, Washington, D.C.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	26419599
Source type:	Blog, Podcast, or Website
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2598310233
Document URL:	https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/how-quit-here-s-what-experts-say-people-should/docview/2598310233/se-2?accountid=44910
Copyright:	Copyright WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post Nov 17, 2021
Last updated:	2021-11-18
Database:	U.S. Major Dailies

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