

Passover

The eight-day holiday of Passover, which celebrates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, is one of the most important Jewish holidays throughout the year. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jewish communities may have specific traditions related to the celebration of Passover; in addition, individuals may choose to celebrate Passover in a variety of different ways.

Passover (*Pesach* in Hebrew) is a very important religious festival within Judaism. It lasts for eight days, and both the first two days and the last two days are traditionally observed as days of rest in which no work is done. Traditionally, Jews have a meal called a *Seder* (from the Hebrew word “order”) on the first two nights of Passover, although some Jews will choose to have only one *Seder* on the first night. During the *Seder*, Jews tell the story of the exodus from Egypt using a text called the *Haggadah*. While Passover is always in the spring, the exact dates change from year to year; managers should therefore be alert and annually check the dates in advance. In 2021, Passover begins at sundown of March 27th and ends at sundown of April 4th. Also note that in Israel, the holiday of Passover is celebrated for seven days with the first and seventh days observed as *hag*, special festival days on which one should not do any work.

Diet

In order to commemorate the plight of the Jewish ancestors who left Egypt so quickly that they did not have time to let their baking bread rise, many Jews eat only unleavened bread, called *matzah*, and abstain from leavened foods for the duration of Passover. Also, many Jews observe the holiday by ridding their homes of all leavened foods (called *chametz* in Hebrew). It is important to note that some Jews who do not keep *kosher* (the word referring to Jewish food laws) throughout the year might still follow Passover’s dietary restrictions. When scheduling events where food is present during Passover, it is important to be aware that Jewish coworkers may be observing Passover traditions and have dietary restrictions during this time that they do not have at other times of the year.

Scheduling

During Passover, Jewish employees may request time off work to attend a *Seder*, observe the holiday, or even to prepare for the holiday. Invite your employees to share how they personally observe Passover and what practices they have that should be respected during the eight days of Passover.

Greetings

It is appropriate to wish a coworker Happy Passover; you may also wish your coworker *Chag Sameach*, which means “happy holiday” in Hebrew.

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