

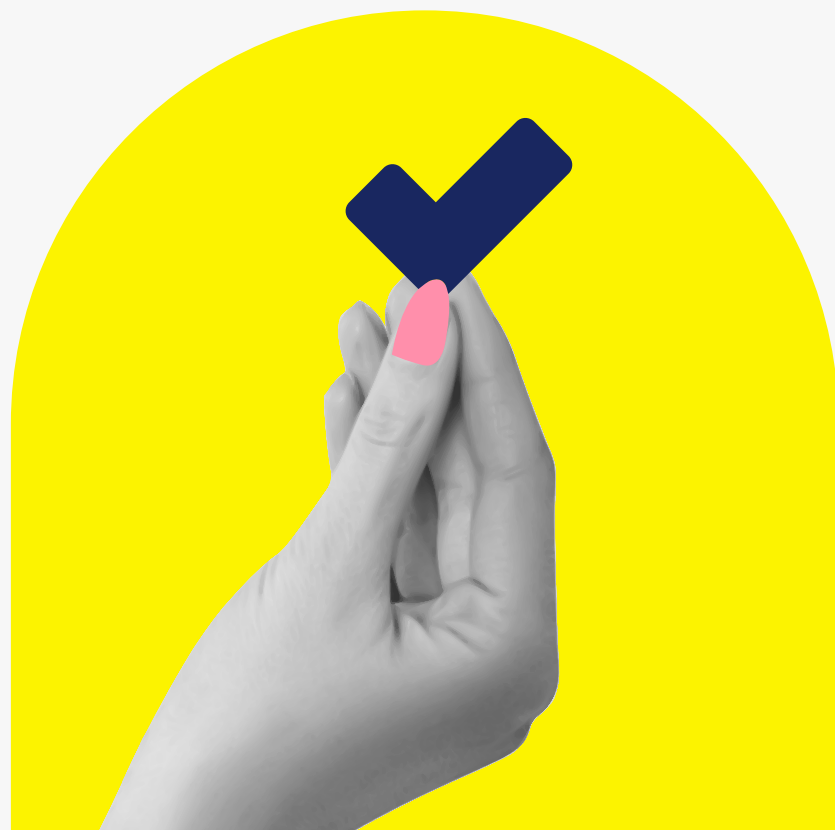
Return to Work Communications Toolkit

Lead the Recovery:
Communications Toolkit for
and Return to Work

This toolkit empowers business owners, managers, and supervisors to clearly communicate what good injury management looks like, from day one of an injury to full return to work.

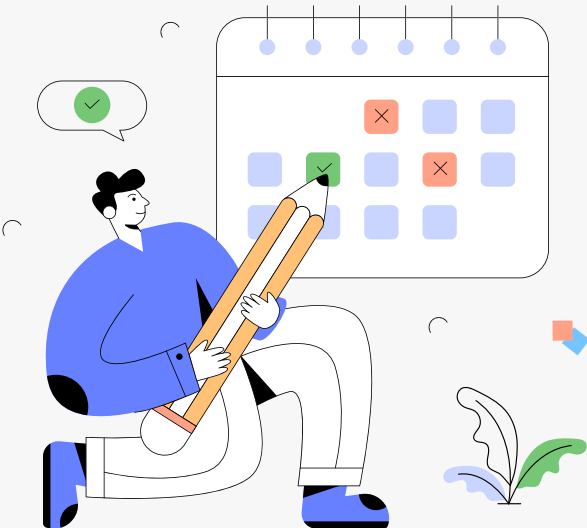
These tools are designed to help build a culture where injuries are taken seriously, recovery is supported early, and no one falls through the cracks. The sample messages, posters, and templates can be adapted to suit your workplace, whether you're on a job site, in an office, or managing a dispersed team.

This isn't about ticking boxes. It's about giving people the confidence to take action when it matters most.



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Introduction

Injury management and return to work rely on clear, timely communication.

The process can feel complex, especially in fast-moving workplaces, but it doesn't have to.

Using plain language and multi-channel communication, this toolkit helps you create a culture where people know what to do, who to talk to, and how to support someone after an injury. Whether you're a business owner, team leader, or site supervisor, these tools make it easier to manage recovery in a way that's practical, proactive, and people-first.

It starts with leadership. setting expectations for early intervention, offering modified duties, and staying connected to the employee throughout their recovery. But it doesn't end there. Every touchpoint matters: from that first phone call, to how certificates are discussed, to whether duties feel safe and supported.

By improving how we talk about injuries, we create a safer, more resilient workplace, one where recovery starts early, and everyone plays a part.

Do

- **Act early:** Contact the employee within 24 hours. A simple call can shape the entire recovery journey.
- **Keep it practical:** Use clear, plain language. Focus on what the employee can do, not just what they can't.
- **Offer support, not pressure:** Modified duties and recovery plans should feel achievable, not forced.
- **Stay in touch:** Consistent contact helps the employee feel connected and speeds up recovery.
- **Make it normal:** Talk about injury recovery as part of good team leadership, not just HR compliance.
- **Use a team approach:** Involve the right people: doctors, insurers, supervisors, and rehab providers.

Don't

- **Delay contact:** Waiting days to check in can damage trust and lead to longer time off work.
- **Use jargon or legal speak:** Terms like "suitable duties" or "cert of capacity" mean little without explanation.
- **Assume time off is the only option:** Modified duties, even 1–2 hours a day, can make a real difference.
- **Treat recovery like a checklist:** Every injury and person is different. flexibility matters.
- **Leave it to the insurer:** Your workplace leadership is just as important as any policy.
- **Ignore the culture:** How your team talks about injury affects whether people speak up early or stay silent.

RTW conversation starters.

These 5 conversation starters can be used for clear and effective communications:

Welcome with Empathy

Begin with a warm, genuine message that acknowledges the employee's recovery journey. Express appreciation for their return and reinforce that their wellbeing is a priority.

Clarify Expectations Together

Discuss their current capacity and limitations. Collaboratively set goals and timelines together.

Offer Flexibility and Checkpoints

Provide options for flexible hours, remote work, or modified duties. Set regular check-ins to reassess progress.

Encourage Open Dialogue

Create a safe space for the employee to share concerns or needs. Reinforce that feedback is welcome and adjustments are normal.

Reinforce Team Support

Ensure the team is informed (with the employee's consent) and aligned on how to offer help. Promote a culture of care, not pressure.

First Conversation

Right After the Injury (Same Day)

Goal: Check on the employee's wellbeing, provide support, and ensure treatment is underway.

"Hey, I just wanted to check in, are you okay? It looked like you were in a bit of pain."

"Let's get you seen by a doctor as soon as possible. Do you want me to help you make an appointment or organise a ride?"

"We'll need to note down what happened for the report, but that can wait, your health comes first."

"Once you've been looked at, I'll check in to see how you're going and what support you might need. There's no pressure, just want to make sure you're looked after."

Key things to say

- "Are you okay?"
- "Let's get you checked out first — we'll worry about the paperwork later."
- "We want to make sure you're safe, supported, and looked after properly."

Points to cover

- Basic first aid and/or emergency response
- Arrange medical treatment (GP or hospital)
- Ensure they get home safely if not continuing work
- Begin incident recording process
- Let them know you'll stay in touch

Second Conversation

Next Day (24–48 Hours Later)

Goal: Understand the employee's medical status, introduce the idea of modified duties, and reassure them that recovery support is available.

*"Hi, just checking in, how did things go at the doctor?"
"Did they give you a Certificate of Capacity yet? If not, no stress, we can wait until you've got one."*

"When you're ready, we can look at some modified duties or reduced hours. Even just being back for a short time each day can make a big difference, for you and for the team."

"There's no pressure, we'll work around what's safe and doable. I'll also keep the insurer in the loop and help coordinate anything you need."

Key things to say

- "How did it go at the doctor?"
- "No pressure — just wanted to check in and see how you're feeling today."
- "We can start thinking about ways to keep you involved without pushing too hard."

Points to cover

- Ask if they received a Certificate of Capacity
- Understand what duties they can or can't do
- Start discussing light duties or reduced hours
- Reinforce that staying connected helps their recovery
- Explain that you'll liaise with the insurer to build a plan

Third Conversation

Planning the Return (Day 3–5)

Goal: Agree on a return-to-work plan that supports recovery and keeps things flexible and safe.

"Hey, now that you've had a few days, I thought we could talk through what a return to work could look like."

"You don't need to be back full-time or at full capacity. We can start with something really light, even one or two hours a day if that feels right."

"Let's look at what the doctor's written and see which duties we could match. I've also got a list of modified tasks we use regularly."

"We'll check in regularly and update the plan based on how you're feeling and what the doctor recommends. This is a team effort — we're here to support you."

Key things to say

- "We can build a plan around what's safe and comfortable for you."
- "You don't need to be 100% to contribute, even small steps back can help."
- "Let's agree on something now and we'll keep adjusting it as you recover."

Points to cover

- Review the Certificate of Capacity together
- Identify suitable duties from your light duties list
- Agree on hours, location, and frequency
- Set a check-in point (e.g. weekly)
- Confirm you'll keep communicating with the doctor and insurer

Common Questions

These are examples of common questions you might get from team members, clients, or stakeholders. Use these responses to guide clear, consistent conversations about your injury management and return to work approach.

Injured Team Member

“Do I have to come back before I’m fully recovered?”

No. You’ll only return when it’s medically safe. But recovery doesn’t always require full duties. Modified tasks, short hours, or remote options are often a great first step, and they can help you heal faster.

“What if I’m not ready yet?”

That’s okay. We’ll stay in touch and check in regularly. We’ll work with your doctor and only move forward when you’re comfortable and cleared to do so.

“Will I be pressured to do tasks I can’t manage?”

No. Your duties will always be based on medical advice and your own feedback. If anything doesn’t feel right, speak up, we’ll adjust.

“Why stay in contact while I’m off work?”

Because feeling disconnected makes recovery harder. Staying in touch means you’ll be supported, not forgotten, and it helps us plan the right duties for when you’re ready.

“Will I still get paid while I’m off?”

If your claim is accepted, you may be entitled to weekly compensation payments, usually based on your Pre-Injury Average Weekly Earnings (PIAWE). This is handled by the insurer. If you’re back on reduced hours, they may also top up your pay.

“How long does it take for payments to start?”

Once the claim and medical certificate are submitted, insurers generally respond within 7 days. We’ll help lodge everything as quickly as possible and keep you updated.

Business Owners / Managers

“Why do we need to do this if it wasn’t a serious injury?”

Because how you respond sets the tone, whether it’s a sprain or something major. Early contact, good communication, and flexible duties reduce costs, improve morale, and help prevent claims from dragging out.

“Do I have to offer light duties?”

If it’s safe and appropriate, yes, it’s one of the most effective ways to support recovery. We’ll provide example duties, and your insurer can help too.

“What if there’s nothing suitable on-site?”

Then we look at off-site or alternative options: admin, training, support tasks, or even modified hours. Recovery doesn’t have to happen all in one place.

“Won’t this just create more work for managers?”

Not if done right. A simple call, a clear plan, and light contact go further than endless paperwork and long absences. It’s short-term effort for long-term gain.

Insurer / Case Manager

“Has the employer been in contact with the employee?”

Yes, we make early contact a priority. We check in within 24 hours of injury and stay in regular contact throughout recovery.

“Is the employer offering suitable duties?”

Yes, we use a structured process to match duties to medical advice. We also have access to light duties by industry and injury type.

“Has the Certificate of Capacity been provided?”

We request the certificate as soon as the employee sees their GP and share it with the insurer immediately to avoid delays.

“Is a rehab provider needed for this case?”

If the case is complex or return-to-work is delayed, we'll consult with you and involve our rehab provider to support the plan.

“Is there a documented RTW Plan?”

Yes, we document duties, hours, restrictions, and review points. We're happy to provide this if required.

Nominated Treating Doctor (NTD)

“What light duties are available?”

We maintain a list of light and modified duties tailored to our roles and common injury types. We can provide this so your recommendations are practical and safe.

“Has the employer offered flexible hours or reduced days?”

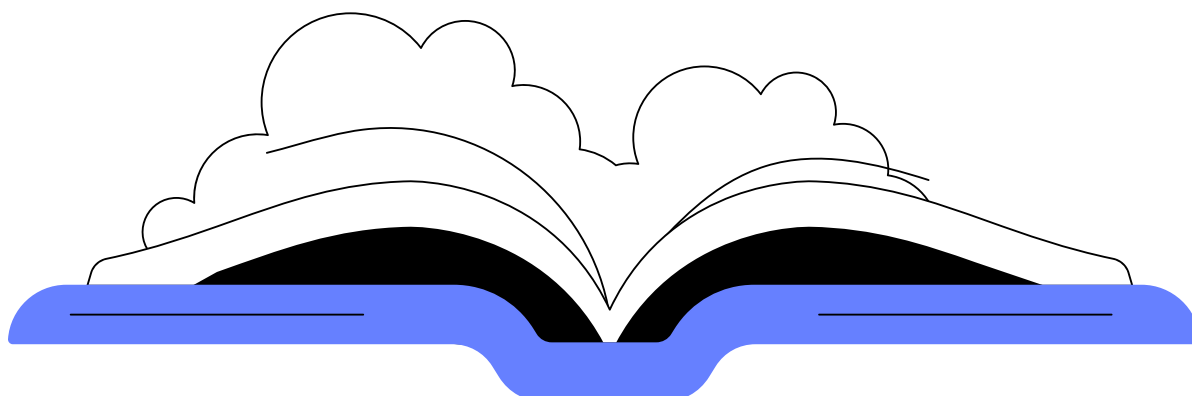
Yes, we're open to part-time, graduated hours, off-site tasks or admin work depending on the employee's capacity.

“Is the employer pressuring the employee to return?”

Absolutely not. We work closely with the employee and always follow your advice. Our focus is on recovery, not pushing someone too early.

“Can I speak with the employer to understand the work environment?”

Yes, we encourage direct communication so you can tailor capacity advice with full understanding of the duties and environment.



Internal Communications

These email templates can be used for clear and effective communications to business owners and senior managers about the importance of Return to Work (RTW), early intervention, and recovery support.

They are designed to build awareness of the business and people benefits, encourage leadership engagement, and strengthen the role of RTW Coordinators across the organisation.

Email 1 – What Return to Work Actually Means

Subject: What is Return to Work and why it matters

Return to Work isn't just about getting someone back on the tools. It's about supporting recovery in a way that's safe, practical, and people-focused.

Every business has a legal obligation to help injured employees recover at or return to work, even if it's on modified duties or reduced hours. This applies no matter what state you're in, and no matter the size of the business.

The good news is, most employees don't need complex rehab or major changes. They just need a plan, a few small adjustments, and regular check-ins. That support can make all the difference in how quickly they return and how well they recover.

If we get this right, we reduce costs, improve morale, and hold onto skilled people. I'm here to help make that process simple and clear.

Let me know if you'd like a quick overview of our current approach.

Email 2 – Why Return to Work Matters

Subject: Return to Work is good for people and good for business

When we support injured employees early and effectively, we don't just reduce time off work. We retain experience, protect productivity, and show that we look after our people.

Here's what good return to work support helps us achieve:

- *Fewer days lost*
- *Lower claim costs*
- *Better recovery outcomes*
- *Less stress on managers and teams*

It starts with a simple phone call and a few small adjustments. That early support sets the tone for recovery.

If you'd like to talk through how we can strengthen our approach or make it easier for supervisors to manage, I'd be happy to share what's working and where we could improve.

Other Key Messages

These additional messages can be used to support your workplace communication about injury recovery and return to work. They're especially helpful for engaging business owners, managers, and team leaders.

- A safe, early return to work helps people recover faster and keeps the team moving.
- The first 72 hours after an injury are critical. Good support early leads to better outcomes.
- Return to work isn't about being fully recovered. It's about staying connected and doing what's safely possible.
- Modified duties are not a favour, they're good practice and part of every workplace's responsibility.
- Every conversation after an injury shapes how supported a employee feels.
- Planning return to work early shows leadership and protects productivity.
- Recovery support doesn't need to be complicated. It just needs to be consistent.
- Injuries happen in every business. What matters is how you respond.
- Helping someone return to work isn't just about ticking a box. It's about keeping people valued, engaged, and moving forward.
- Supervisors play a key role. Staying in contact and offering simple, safe tasks can make all the difference.
- Return to work is part of safety, not separate from it.
- Most employees want to come back. They just need the right support to get there.



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