

Breaks and Lunches

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/workhours/breaks>



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Breaks and Meal Periods

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Breaks and Meal Periods

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Federal law does not require lunch or coffee breaks. However, when employers do offer short breaks (usually lasting about 5 to 20 minutes), federal law considers the breaks as compensable work hours that would be included in the sum of hours worked during the work week and considered in determining if overtime was worked.

Unauthorized extensions of authorized work breaks need not be counted as hours worked when the employer has expressly and unambiguously communicated to the employee that the authorized break may only last for a specific length of time, that any extension of the break is contrary to the employer's rules, and any extension of the break will be punished.

Bona fide meal periods (typically lasting at least 30 minutes), serve a different purpose than coffee or snack breaks and, thus, are not work time and are not compensable.

Web Pages on This Topic

[Hours Worked Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#)

Provides general information about what constitutes compensable time under the FLSA.

[Wage and Hour Division's Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Answers questions about breaks.

[What Does the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\) NOT Require?](#)

The FLSA does not require meal or break periods.

[Regulations on Rest Periods](#)

Makes the distinction between rest periods of 5 to 20 minutes and compensable waiting time or on-call time, all of which are paid work time.