

What Time Should You Leave Work? A Viral TikTok Is Sparking Debate About What 5 P.M. Really Means.

A new video has workers asking when the right time is to leave the office.

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Key Takeaways

- When should you leave work if holding a salaried, 9-to-5 job?
- A viral TikTok, with more than 20 million views, is sparking debate online.
- Years of remote work have blurred the 9-to-5 timeline.

If your workday ends at 5 p.m., are you out the door right when the clock strikes five?

A viral TikTok has reignited the debate about leaving-the-office etiquette. In the scripted clip, which has more than 20 million views so far, a seemingly Gen Z employee walks into a company leader's office (as evidenced by having an office to begin with – and he's wearing a suit with his feet up on the desk) and says she's heading out for the day.

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The boss then says, sarcastically, "Wow, five o'clock, right on the dot, I just love your work-life balance."

She responds: “The workday ends at five.” The boss then says, “We stop working at five, that’s not when we go home.”

@therealsamgeller SATIRE: TikTok, help us decide! #work #worklife #officelife #officehumor ♪ Little Things – Adrián Berenguer

So which is it? Is 5 p.m. when you start packing up? Or is 5 p.m. when you are walking out the door?

Most of the comments on the clip were adamant that leaving at five on the dot is the acceptable way to go.

“You get paid to 5, you leave at 5,” one comment said.

“5:01 I’m nowhere near the building,” read another.

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Some questioned whether you even need to tell your boss that you are leaving in the first place.

But it might not be that simple.

Years of remote work have blurred the 9-to-5 line and upended what healthy work-life boundaries look like in the workplace.

For example, in 2024, recruiting agency Randstad’s yearly survey of 26,000 workers found for the first time ever that work-life balance was a bigger motivator for employees than a high salary, per Fast Company.

Related: Knowledge-Based 9-5 Jobs Will Slowly Become Obsolete. This Is How To Prepare.

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