

What you should know about ETOs

The ETO (Earned Time Off) program allows you to work 25 minutes extra each workday so that you can earn time off. The terms of the ETO program are in articles 26.10 to 26.12 of the collective agreement. This document answers common questions about ETOs.

1. Must ETO arrangements be the same across the Board?

ETO arrangements may be different in different areas of the Board. The program is meant to be flexible so that it can meet the needs of employees, clients, and the business. This means that local arrangements should be:

- Flexible
- Reasonable
- Based on operational considerations

2. Can I only take ETO in the next quarter?

Staff earn time in one quarter and normally take it off in the next quarter. Exceptions may be made to this general "rule", but if they are, both the manager and employee must agree to the arrangement.

Keep these things in mind about exceptions:

- You may ask to take your ETO in the quarter after the one in which you would normally take it. If approved, you must take the time in that quarter.
- You may ask to take ETOs in a block. For example, you could request to take a 10-day block. You must be reasonable in making such requests. If you want to take a 10-day block, you should request it at the beginning of the year. The more time you want in a block, the earlier you should make your request. This will avoid any confusion and prevent the possibility of losing the time.
- The only caveat on the amount of ETO you can take at a time, is that you must have earned the time by year's end.

3. What happens if I have scheduled some ETO in advance and I don't earn enough time?

You can still take the time off, but you must ensure that by year's end you have earned as much time as you have taken – i.e., that your ETO bank isn't in a deficit position. If you don't, the excess time will have to be recorded as vacation, CTO

(compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay), or unpaid leave. You also have the option to cancel the time.

4. What has priority—vacation or ETO?

The test for acceptance or denial of ETO is operational considerations. Vacations have priority over ETO when requests for the same dates can't be granted for operational reasons.

5. Does my manager have to approve ETO for medical and dental appointments?

ETO was intended to be used for personal business and medical and dental appointments. Therefore, employees are entitled to request time off at short notice within the quarter. Your manager's arrangements must be able to accommodate requests on short notice.

6. Was ETO intended for special events?

Yes. Managers should also ensure that local guidelines are flexible enough to allow you to attend special events that occur throughout the year for which you may not have been able to schedule vacation. Examples include family reunions, weddings, and school professional development days.

7. Can managers make rules on how far in advance they will approve ETO requests?

Managers may want to determine how far in advance they prefer to approve ETO requests. However, they can't make a "hard and fast rule"—only a guideline. The employer has to consider all requests and decide to approve or not approve a request based on operational reasons.

8. What's the process to re-schedule when my ETO request isn't approved?

Article 26.10 (d) says: "Where an employee has made a reasonable attempt to schedule ETO and for operational reasons is unable to take such time, it will either be paid out at straight time or carried over. If carried over, it must be used in the next quarter or it will be paid out at straight time. Where an employee does not make a reasonable attempt to schedule ETO there will be no payout and the carryover will be deleted in 7.25 hour and 3.62 increments."

What is considered to be "a reasonable attempt" to re-schedule? Each case depends on the circumstances, but clearly it wouldn't be reasonable to request alternate dates that you knew were not available. On the other hand, if none of the alternate dates available are convenient to you, then your manager should allow you to carry over the time.

9. How are ETO disputes handled?

If you and your manager can't resolve any scheduling disputes, ask your shop steward for help. If it still can't be resolved, your steward can refer it to the Work Schedule Dispute Resolution Committee, which is a joint committee of CEU and Board representatives.

10. If I'm sick, can I make up the ETO to avoid deductions from my ETO bank?

ETO is earned daily. Regardless of whether you are an "A", "B", or "S" type employee, you can't make up ETO you didn't work because of being on sick leave. By missing the day, you have lost the opportunity to work the time.

11. Do I lose ETO credits for other types of absences?

If you are away for a full day, you lose the ETO credit for that day and can't make it up. Exceptions to this are:

- If you are on vacation, ETO, or statutory holidays, you

receive the full credit for those days.

- If you are on union-paid union leave (UUP), your ETO is not deducted from your ETO bank. The Board bills the CEU for the 25 minutes of ETO.

12. Do I have to work my ETO each day, Monday to Friday?

There are two exceptions to this, for "B" type employees only:

- If you complete your weekly hours before the end of the normal workweek, you may work your remaining ETO time on your last day of work. For example, if you have worked 36.5 hours by Wednesday afternoon (plus ETO time for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday), you could work the ETO time for Thursday and Friday on Wednesday as well.
- If you and your manager agree, you may work your ETO hours over two weeks, including weekends. This applies only to your ETO hours. This means that you could work 36.5 hours each week of a two-week period and work four hours and ten minutes (the total ETO you would work in 10 days) on a Saturday or Sunday. Any additional time you work on that Saturday or Sunday would be overtime and must be compensated at the appropriate overtime rate.