

Tribunal Time Limits *and Early Conciliation*

The deadlines that decide whether a claim can be heard, and the first step
before most claims.



Last reviewed: October 2026



GOV.UK · Acas · LRA · OITFET



England, Wales & Scotland, with a Northern Ireland slide

ukworkrights.co.uk

The basics

- There is no fee to make an employment tribunal claim.
- You can represent yourself. Losing a claim does not usually mean you pay your employer's legal costs.
- Before most claims you must notify Acas for early conciliation. It is free and confidential.

3 months or 6 months?

- Most claims: 3 months less 1 day from the act you are complaining about.
- It is 6 months less 1 day only where that act (or the last act in a series) happened on or after 1 October 2026.
- If it happened before 1 October 2026, you still have 3 months less 1 day, even if you claim after that date.
- Statutory redundancy pay and equal pay have 6 months less 1 day.

▲ WATCH OUT

Your employer's grievance, disciplinary or appeal process does not change your time limit.

Dismissal and pay

- Dismissal: the time limit runs from the effective date of termination — in almost all cases the last day of your notice, or the day you were dismissed if no notice was given.
- Unpaid wages or holiday pay: counted from when the pay was due. For a series, from the last one.
- Unlawful deductions cannot go back more than 2 years before the claim is made — so claiming sooner protects more.
- Notice pay (breach of contract) in Scotland stays at 3 months less 1 day for now.

Acas first

- Notify Acas online at acas.org.uk or call 0300 123 1100. Your time limit is paused while conciliation runs — but only if you notify Acas within your time limit.
- If you contacted Acas on or after 1 December 2025, conciliation can last up to 12 weeks.
- Put your employer's correct legal name on the form. Check Companies House if it is a limited company.
- After conciliation you get a certificate. You then have at least 1 month from receiving it to make your claim.

How long you need to have worked

- Now: at least 2 years of continuous employment for ordinary unfair dismissal.
- Where the employment ends on or after 1 January 2027: at least 6 months.
- No minimum service for automatically unfair reasons, such as whistleblowing, pregnancy or raising a health and safety concern. Discrimination claims need no minimum service.

Missed it? Making a claim

- A late claim is up to the tribunal judge. In most cases time limits are strictly enforced.
- The tribunal can extend the time only on narrow grounds: "not reasonably practicable" for most claims, "just and equitable" for discrimination.
- The claim form is the ET1, online from GOV.UK. Your employer usually has 28 days to reply on an ET3.

Tribunal claims in Northern Ireland

- Claims go to an industrial tribunal (or the Fair Employment Tribunal for religious belief or political opinion discrimination), through OITFET, not GOV.UK.
- Tell the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) before most claims. There is no Acas early conciliation in Northern Ireland.
- Most claims, including unfair dismissal and discrimination: 3 months less 1 day. The October 2026 6-month change reaches only a few claims in Northern Ireland.
- Telling the LRA within the time limit stops the clock for up to 1 calendar month, plus up to 14 more days if both sides agree.
- Unfair dismissal needs at least 1 year of continuous employment.

Frequently asked questions

Q I'm appealing my dismissal internally. Does that give me more time?

No. Notify Acas (or the LRA) before your time limit runs out, even while the appeal is going on.

Q Will it cost me anything to claim?

There is no fee. Costs orders against you are rare.

Q I was dismissed on 15 October 2026. Is it 3 or 6 months?

In England, Wales and Scotland, an act on or after 1 October 2026 has 6 months less 1 day for most claims. In Northern Ireland, most claims stay at 3 months less 1 day.

FREE RIGHTS GUIDANCE

Check your *tribunal deadline*

Get plain-English guidance on your rights and your employer's legal duties.

ACAS

0300 123 1100

Mon–Fri 8am–6pm · [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)

LRA (NORTHERN IRELAND)

03300 555 300

Labour Relations Agency

OITFET

Forms, no advice

employmenttribunalsni.co.uk

EQUALITY COMMISSION NI

028 9050 0600

Northern Ireland

CITIZENS ADVICE / ADVICE NI

Free advice

Advice NI 0800 915 4604

UK WORK RIGHTS — FREE GUIDE

**Employment Tribunal Claims
(England, Wales and
Scotland)**

ukworkrights.co.uk/guide-employment-tribunal-gb.html

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