

Back from holiday

The first day back costs most of what the holiday gave you. Not because the work piled up, but because you try to catch up on all of it. Copilot is useful here in one specific way: it replaces catching up rather than speeding it up. Reading 800 emails faster still means reading 800 emails. Two of these six steps happen before you leave — those are the ones that matter most.

As of: 6 August 2026

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Hand over in ten minutes

Let Copilot write the handover instead of writing it yourself. It knows the projects, the open threads and who's involved — you correct it and send it to whoever covers for you.

„Summarise my open projects: current status, next step, who's involved, and what a decision would need. Write it for a colleague covering for me who doesn't know the detail.“

Block the day you return

The single most effective step. Keep your first day back free of meetings — you need it to read, not to attend. Set it as a calendar instruction before you go.

RULES • *„Decline all meeting invitations for [date of return] and suggest the following day instead. Exception: my manager.“*

THE FIRST MORNING

Briefing, not inbox

Don't open your mail first. Ask for a briefing first, then decide what the inbox is still good for. The order is the whole trick.

„What happened between [start] and [end] that concerns me? Structure it as: decisions taken, open questions addressed to me, and things already resolved without me.“

What actually needs you

Most of the backlog is copies. Ask specifically where you were addressed directly, not where you were on the list.

„Which messages and mentions from the last two weeks were addressed to me directly and are still unanswered? Sort by how urgent they look.“

Meetings you missed

You don't need to watch recordings. Where the transcript is on, the summary is enough — decisions and tasks, not the conversation.

„Summarise /[meeting]: which decisions were taken, and which tasks fall to me?“

THE REST OF THE WEEK

Hand the rest to Cowork

What's left is a multi-step job, and that's Cowork's territory. Give it the backlog as one task and let it run in the background while you do the work that needs you.

„Work through my backlog: draft replies to the unanswered messages, flag anything you're unsure about, and list what I need to decide myself.“

Don't catch up on all of it

A good part of two weeks resolved itself. Decisions were taken, questions answered by someone else, threads went quiet. Reading it anyway costs you the day and changes nothing. Read what's still open, and let the rest go — that's not negligence, it's the reason someone covered for you.