



Job Offers & Salary Negotiation

Negotiation is a normal—even expected—part of the hiring process. Working to get the best offer possible can have an impact on your career, affecting satisfaction with the current job as well as your future trajectory. As you start to look over your job offer, here are a few actions to think about:

Do your homework on salary

The first thing you should do prior to even walking in the door for an interview is to know what you're worth. How much does someone in this position, in this industry, in this location, at your level, typically make? Sites like Salary, Payscale, Glassdoor, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics can give you a detailed breakdown of the average starting salary for the position you are interviewing for while considering a wide variety of other factors, including location, certifications, and education level.

Conduct a self-assessment

As a fresh grad, you may be wondering if you even have the right to negotiate a job offer. This is where a self-assessment can come in handy. Ask yourself:

- What can you offer this employer that other candidates cannot?
- Do you have any certifications?
- Are you intimately familiar with their products or services because you've worked for one of their customers in the past?
- Are the skills you obtained in school unique to the location of the employer?

If you have a sense of your value in the marketplace you will have the confidence to negotiate successfully.

There's more to compensation than salary

There are many things to take into account when negotiating other than just your base salary. You want to look at the entire compensation package, which includes your benefits. Benefits can comprise insurance, vacation time, tuition reimbursement, stock options, relocation expenses, professional membership fees, gym memberships, flexible work options, and unpaid leave time.

Now, just because you can negotiate your job offer doesn't mean that you necessarily should. Some industries are also more conducive to salary negotiation than others. For example, highly structured sectors like the government or military will not have negotiable salaries.

If you've received what you perceive to be a fair offer at a company that has a clear path for advancement and where you will be working on projects that excite you, it's ok to accept the offer as is. However, even if you plan to do this, it's always wise to give yourself at least 24 hours to review the offer and talk about it with a family member or trusted advisor. No legitimate company will force you to give your acceptance on the spot.

You should take that time granted to you to really make sure this is an offer you're happy with.

Negotiation FAQs

How should I evaluate the offer?

When receiving a job offer, there are several personal and professional factors you should consider in making your decision.

Consider:

- The type of work you will be doing, who your manager and co-workers will be, and how you will fit into the organizational culture
- The company location, travel and commuting requirements
- Benefits offered including vacation time, retirement packages, tuition assistance and salary
- The cost of living, especially if you are relocating, so you can make an educated decision about the salary offer

Can I ask for more time?

Do not hesitate to ask the employer for more details about what it is like to work for his or her organization. If you have reservations about an internship or job offer or are actively interviewing with other companies, contact an employer to see if you can be given more time to decide.

Should I negotiate the package?

Don't feel obligated to negotiate the compensation package with an employer. It is not necessary if you feel the employer is making you a fair offer based on your skills, experience and market value for the position. Not all entry-level compensation packages are negotiable.

How should I officially accept the offer?

Once you have sorted through your priorities and chosen the offer that best meets your needs, call the employer to accept the position. Request to receive the desired offer in writing. If that is not the company's normal policy, then follow up with a confirmation email or letter that includes the position, start date, rate of pay and any other terms the employer agreed upon. Keep a copy of the company's letter, and/or your confirmation letter, for future reference. And, congratulations!

Can I still apply for other jobs after accepting the offer?

Once you have accepted an offer, do not continue to apply for other jobs or interviews. If an organization finds out that you are pursuing other opportunities after accepting their offer, you can risk your reputation and offer with that organization.

How can I decline the offer?

Contact the employer by phone or email to state you are declining the offer. Indicate your appreciation for the offer and the opportunity to interview. Consider following up by sending a rejection letter, thanking those who interviewed you for their time and stating some of the factors that interested you in the organization.