

You've Received a Job Offer... Now What?

Express your appreciation. Yes, you may be qualified, capable, and completely deserving of this job. Nevertheless, keep in mind that this employer has chosen you over an untold number of applicants, many of which held similar qualifications and were just as capable. Convey to them your gratitude for this opportunity.

Take some time to think about it. Unless the offer truly is too good to pass up, it's best to ask the employer for some time to think the offer over. This is not an unreasonable request; you want to be confident in your decision. For new graduates, two to four weeks is generally considered reasonable, while for working professionals one to three days is more typical; however, the employer may ask for an answer sooner than you request.

Assess the offer. Use the time you have been given to thoroughly evaluate every aspect of the offer. A few things to consider when reviewing the offer:

- Your professional needs and expectations – While it's not practical to expect to land the perfect job at this stage in your career, you do want something that you consider fulfilling and a "good fit." Will the job be stimulating, with opportunities for professional growth? Is it a logical next step in your career trajectory? Does the culture and mission of the company align with your personal values?
- The salary – Your salary is a reflection of your experience, level of responsibility, and value to the company. Moreover, what you earn will have a large impact on the lifestyle you will be able to lead. As a result, you want to ensure that your salary is fair and equitable and will allow you to maintain a desirable – but realistic – standard of living. Researching the average salaries of similar positions as well as the cost of living in areas surrounding the company's location will help you determine if the salary is adequate.
- The location – Where the company is located geographically will greatly influence your life outside of work. You will need to determine whether or not you are comfortable with the advantages and limitations of the company's location and the impact they will have on your personal interests, needs, and obligations. Some aspects of the location to review are: affordable living options nearby; transportation options and commute length; recreational activities and nightlife; and proximity to friends, family, acquaintances, etc.

Should I Negotiate My Salary?

If the offered salary is less than what you expected, you may be able to negotiate. However, you will need to have a logical justification for why you should be making more than what they have proposed.

You SHOULD consider negotiating if:

The salary is less than what you are making at your current job. If you are currently working at another company and aren't absolutely miserable there, you might have little incentive to leave and take a pay cut. This may be especially true if you consider the offered job to be a lateral or progressive career move, or certain circumstances (kids, debts, etc.) do not afford you the luxury of taking home a smaller paycheck. (**Caution:** if you would be relocating to a new area for the job, always take cost of living into account. The salary may be lower simply because renting/owning a home is far more affordable there than in your current location.)

The salary is significantly less than the average for jobs in that field and location. It's sensible to want to be paid for your time and efforts at a fair market value. But you will need to provide evidence that the salary offered does not do that, which means you will need to come to the negotiating table with a little research. A few places you can investigate the average salary of comparable jobs include: Glassdoor (www.glassdoor.com/Salaries); Salary.com – (www.salary.com/); and Indeed (www.indeed.com/salaries).

You SHOULD NOT consider negotiating if:

You have no argument beyond need or greed. An employer won't care about how much your student loan payments are or the cost of rent. And they certainly won't care about your dream to drive a fancy car and own beachfront property. You do not want to come across as if you are only interested in milking the company for every dollar you can; they might reconsider their decision.

The salary is already their best offer. Sometimes an employer just doesn't have any wiggle room to negotiate because the salary is derived from a fixed funding source. For instance, the position may be grant funded. Other times, an employer may outright state that the offer they have given is the best they can provide. If an employer explicitly states or even strongly suggests that an offer is non-negotiable from the start, it's best to take them at their word. By still insisting to negotiate, you demonstrate to the employer that you either aren't listening or have little empathy for their budgetary constraints.

You've already accepted the job. Coming back to the employer to ask for more money right after you have said "Yes" to the original offer is both unprofessional and a poor strategic move. Before you even start the job, the employer may evaluate you as indecisive and lacking in good judgement. This is why it is very important to take time to review the offer before coming to a decision.

How Do I Negotiate?

If you find yourself in a position to negotiate your salary, always keep in mind the following:

Express your interest in the position. You want to communicate to the employer that you very much want the job; you are just hesitant because you feel the salary isn't quite where it needs to be. Moving straight into salary negotiations without first establishing strong interest in the position places initial doubts in the employer's mind about your motivations.

State your case. Remember, you need strong reasons for requesting a higher salary *and* evidence to back up your arguments. Do your research beforehand and come prepared. Provide the employer with any data that supports your claim.

Make a counteroffer. Once you've made your case, it's time to propose a salary you deem more fitting. Be careful, though; the salary you propose should align with the evidence you have provided. If your research turned up that the average salary for your position is \$3000 more than the employer offered, don't go then ask for \$8000 more.

The employer will then accept, reject, or counter your counteroffer. If they counter, you may wish to counter once more; however, avoid haggling simply for the sake of haggling. If the employer's counter is reasonable, there is no need to carry on.

The Final Word – Accepting or Rejecting the Offer

Ultimately, you will need to decide whether or not you want to accept the offer. Be practical in your decision-making – no job will be perfect, and yet you don't want to put yourself in a position where you will be job searching again soon due to burnout, low morale, or lack of motivation.

If you accept the offer, ask for it in writing. This should not surprise the employer, and if they refuse it's a red flag. If you decide to reject the offer, thank the employer for their time and consideration and clearly – but diplomatically – state your reasons for the rejection. This will allow the employer to decide whether they are willing and able to address your concerns in an effort to reignite your interest or are ready to move on with an offer to the next candidate on their list.

Career Advisors are available to meet with you to review a job offer and discuss negotiation techniques. Make an appointment with CCS by logging into STAR or by calling our office at 512-471-9421. For additional online resources, visit the Career Toolkit on our website (moody.utexas.edu/ccs).