

Negotiating a Job Offer

PDCO Career Resources

Negotiating a job offer can seem intimidating, but like interviewing, it is a skill that can be learned with practice and preparation. Companies often expect you to negotiate and thus consider that when making their first offer. Therefore, as long as you negotiate respectfully and within reason, be confident about asking for the things that you will need to be successful in your new job.

Responding to the Initial Offer

A company you applied to called you and offered you a job. You listened carefully, expressed appreciation for the offer, and made sure to ask for it in writing. You know you are not supposed to accept the offer or any terms on the phone call. So what might you say?

"Would it be possible to send everything you've just described to me in a quick e-mail? It would be really helpful if I could take a look at all of the details together, and then I'll be able to organize any questions I might have and I'll respond by (specific day), as you requested."

The information and resources below will support you as you decide whether to accept the offer as-is, negotiate for more satisfactory terms, or decline the offer all together. Note that negotiations should only occur after you receive an initial offer—not during the interview.

Getting Started

Before you rush into a discussion with your requests, think about what you actually want and need to accept the position. A higher salary? Relocation funds? Stock options? You do not have to ask for more, but if you decided that there are items you require to start your position successfully, you need to come into your meeting prepared to negotiate.

Take the time to **research the position and understand what terms are being offered in your contract**. If you are not satisfied with the offer, try to negotiate better terms. Remember, you are negotiating for the job you were offered, not the job you necessarily wanted. Make sure to tailor your research to the specific job offered.

What is negotiable?

- **Salary.** What is the history of salary in this position? Sites like [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com), [salary.com](https://www.salary.com) and [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) typically offer a general idea as to what other individuals in your type of position are being paid. Are you moving to a new area? What is a necessary salary there based on cost of living? You may wish to check out [payscale.com's interactive Cost of Living Calculator](https://www.payscale.com/cost-of-living-calculator) which can help you determine what salary might be best for you!

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- **Benefits.** What are the health coverage options and when do the policies take effect? Will you have dependent and spousal coverage? Is dental, eye, and mental health included? What are plans for retirement, life insurance, and disability?
- **Time Away from Work.** Are you offered any vacation time right away? How long do you have to wait until you accrue time off? How early do you have to request time off? What does sick leave look like for your position? Is there maternity and paternity leave?
- **Relocation.** Research the cost of living in the area. Will they pay for your moving expenses? Are there options for temporary housing?
- **Timing.** It is important to know when you are expected to start your new position. When does the contract begin? Will your office be ready when you arrive?

Next Steps...

- Choose three to five items from the above list that are most important and critical for your success; know what you need for cost of living in the area.
- Communicate with the person who provided you with the offer; it may feel difficult to bring up certain topics, but in the long run it will make your life and employment a lot easier.

How to Negotiate

- Negotiate politely and with respect. Go into the call or meeting well versed on your proposal.
- Start positive - mention how much you like a particular aspect of the position.
- Give reasons for why you are making your requests. Be sure to keep these reasons professional, not personal.
 - You may be asking for a higher salary or flexible hours so you can afford childcare, but you may not necessarily want to use that as your reason. Instead, focus on the experience, drive, and performance you will bring to the position.
- Consider mentioning competing offers you may have as leverage and provide statistics or information from competing interviews on what someone in your position typically receives.
- After initially discussing your negotiations, be patient, and get the new offer (if one is made) in writing.
- The point in which you stop negotiating should be predetermined to an extent, and you should know what you are and are not willing to accept. Prepare to accept an offer when satisfied, or walk away if it will not benefit you in the ways you need.

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Additional Resources

- "Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In" by Fisher R, Ury W, & Patton B. ([Get a digital, video, or audio copy at the JHU library](#))
- "[Negotiating, Non-Academic Style](#)"
- "[How to Negotiate Salary: 37 Tips You Need to Know](#)"