

Evaluating and Negotiating Job Offers

Congratulations! After all your work, you've received a job offer. Now it's time to decide what you want to do next. First you need to figure out if this job is right for you. If you think it is, get ready to negotiate.

Now would be a good time to meet with a [Career Advisor](#) or drop into Career Services for advice about evaluating and negotiating job offers.

Below are a few things for you to think about.

Advice for Entry-Level Candidates

Evaluate the Offer

Consider what is important to you in your first professional job. No matter how pleased you are with the offer, it's still wise to delay your acceptance for a short time so that you can objectively evaluate the offer in relation to your personal and career goals.

If you have not already done so, research salary and cost of living information before you make a decision. Politely ask the employer for the latest reasonable date by which they would like your reply.

If You Have Other Offers

Explain this to the employer. Reaffirm your interest in the offered position, but also express that you wish to carefully evaluate the other offer(s) as well. Keep in mind the importance of preserving your positive relationship with the employer throughout the negotiation process, no matter what you decide.

Factors to Consider

There are many aspects to think about in a job offer—not only salary. Some important considerations in evaluating a job offer are:

- Your start date (sometimes there is flexibility surrounding your starting date)
- Responsibilities and tasks of the job
- Working conditions (colleagues, supervisor, size of organization, organizational culture)
- Training and development opportunities
- Salary, salary review, and increases
- Frequency of performance reviews (potential for salary increase)
- Benefits other than salary (relocation allowance, vacation, leave, insurance, retirement savings plan, profit sharing, tuition reimbursement, professional membership, and association activities)
- Geographic location (review **salary and cost of living**)
- Number of hours expected in a typical workday/week
- Parking/transportation costs
- Travel on the job
- Lifestyle that the job will involve

Time Frame

What is a reasonable time frame for responding to (accepting/declining) a job offer? And what is considered unreasonable pressure from an employer for an instant response (“exploding” job offer)? NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) offers complete guidelines for [reasonable job offer deadlines](#).

Delaying Your Response

If you are not ready to accept an offer, it is appropriate to ask for more time. You may have other offers to consider, or you may simply be unsure whether the offer is a good fit for you. The employer may be working with a certain hiring timeline and may decide not to allow you an extension. Ultimately, the match between you and the employer will be best if you can take the time up front to properly evaluate the offer.

As an entry-level employee you might not be able to negotiate your salary right away. But a 60-day, 90-day, or 120-day performance review and pay raise possibility might be an option. If salary negotiations are not an immediate option, you might ask about the frequency of future salary/performance reviews. You might also inquire about annual bonuses and benefits such as association memberships, tuition reimbursement for future education, or travel.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to ask whether the employer offers a signing bonus. This depends on the industry and competitiveness of the position. When evaluating or comparing offers, keep in mind that for most entry-level employees, the responsibilities of the first job and the career growth potential it provides can be more important than the actual starting salary. Consider negotiating for benefits other than salary, such as extra vacation time or a relocation allowance.

Negotiating Quick Tips

- **Ask** if there is “wiggle room” to negotiate in the first place.
- **Always be enthusiastic about the offer.** If the employer doesn’t think you want the job, they may be less likely to want you.
- **Be confident (but not arrogant).** Remember, the company has invested time and resources interviewing candidates and does not want to start over unless it has to. It is up to you to remind your potential employers of how you will be a valuable member of their team.
- **Silence is ok!** While silence often makes people uncomfortable, a pause in the conversation is ok. No one really wants to do business with a chatterbox. Filling the silence in a negotiation can also signal that you are lacking confidence or that you are extremely nervous. After you’ve made your request or posed a question, stop talking and wait for a response.
- **Be realistic.** Don’t be greedy or naive; base your negotiation on your skills and the level of job for which you are applying.
- **Leave your emotions outside.** This is a business transaction. Do not let your pride, fear, uncertainty or any other emotion impact what you say or do.
- **Be prepared to walk away.** No matter how well you negotiate, the deal might not meet your expectations in one of the areas you know is important to you. Decide ahead of time when to say thank you and walk away from the table.
- **Get the offer in writing.** Be sure you get the negotiated terms in writing before you accept the offer.

Accepting the Offer

Verbally confirm your acceptance of the offer and follow up with a written confirmation reiterating salary, start date, and position title. Express your appreciation for the offer and convey your enthusiasm for joining the organization. If applicable, specify when you will meet additional conditions of employment, such as completing a medical exam or sending required documents.

As soon as you officially accept an offer, you should withdraw your candidacy from all other employers. If you are participating in Fort Lewis College's on-campus recruiting, this is a requirement. Once you have accepted an offer, please also notify [Career Services](#) of your good news.

Declining the Offer

Verbally decline the offer, then also send a well-written letter thanking the employer for their efforts in recruiting you and for the offer. Explain (generally, not in great detail) why the other offer you are taking better matches your needs or desires at this point in time, but express your sincere appreciation for the opportunity to interview. [Contact a career advisor](#) if you would like assistance in drafting this letter.

Even though you are declining their offer now, it's always a good idea to keep the door open for a possible future connection with the organization!

Ethical Negotiations

Accepting a job offer and then continuing to seek a better offer may seem like a good idea; after all, you've often been advised to keep your options open. In fact, it is considered unethical to keep yourself on the market once you have made a commitment to an employer.

For students who participate in our campus recruiting program, accepting and then declining an offer is unacceptable. It damages the relationship between the employer and Fort Lewis College. If you are having difficulty making a decision about an offer, we encourage you to discuss your situation [with a Career Advisor](#) prior to making a decision.

Your acceptance is a commitment that implies you have ended your job search and will soon be a part of that organization. Remember, how you handle such decisions is a reflection of your values, priorities, and ethical/professional conduct.

Additional Resources

- [PayScale](#) is a salary comparison site that offers helpful articles about evaluating companies/jobs and the corresponding salaries, as well as a salary negotiation guide with helpful tips for job seekers at all levels.
- [Negotiation Tactics 101](#) – These videos feature negotiation expert Professor Leigh Thompson from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. In under an hour you can learn the basics, find out how to avoid pitfalls, prepare your argument, and develop your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement).
- [Personal Branding Blog](#) – This site offers a wealth of career advice and many blog entries about salary negotiation.

- [5 Top Negotiation Tips](#) – Molly Fletcher, nicknamed by CNN as “The Female Jerry Maguire,” has spent nearly two decades representing top sports figures, including Major League Baseball All-Stars, professional golfers, championship NBA and NCAA coaches, and media personalities. She is the only female agent to close more than \$500 million in deals and the author of *A Winner’s Guide to Negotiating: How Conversation Gets Deals Done*. In this article she shares her five best negotiating tips.
- [Personal SWOT Analysis](#) (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) in job negotiation (can be useful for interview preparation as well)

Advice for Experienced Alumni

If you have an established career, these resources can help you move ahead.

[PayScale Salary Negotiation Guide](#) and [Quintessential Careers Salary Negotiation Resources & Tools](#)

Two books that you may find helpful:

- *Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make 1,000 Dollars A Minute* by Jack Chapman
- *Ask For It* by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever