

Negotiating Your First Position



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Explore. Experience. Engage.

BE PREPARED

During your job search process, research:

- **“Survivability” salary:** minimum salary you need to survive, including cost of living
- **Competitive salary:** your market “worth” based on type of work/profession and geographic location (e.g. salary.com, National Association of Colleges and Employers annual *Salary Survey* in Career Services Resource Center)
- **Job factors:** Rank order the factors for each employment opportunity including, but not limited to, salary with 1 being most important:
 - ___ Salary
 - ___ Benefits (insurance, retirement, vacation)
 - ___ Starting date
 - ___ Location
 - ___ Training/Use of Experience
 - ___ Travel
 - ___ Skill Transferability
 - ___ Advancement Potential
 - ___ Job Status
 - ___ Learning Potential
 - ___ Significant Responsibility
 - ___ Creativity
 - ___ Variety of Responsibility
 - ___ Independence
 - ___ Company Image
 - ___ Quality of Management
 - ___ Industry Growth
 - ___ Relocation costs

THE JOB OFFER

You are not ready to start negotiations until you have received a formal job offer.

Type of offer:

- First Offer, Best Offer
- Negotiation is OK and expected

Usually there is less room to negotiate a salary or benefits if:

- job is low-level
- company is bureaucratic
- corporation possesses a detailed compensation plan
- there are more candidates for a position than there are available jobs

RESPONDING TO AN OFFER

- Listen carefully to any offer that is made and make sure you get the details in writing
- Make certain they know how excited you feel about the new job
- Respond that this is a very important decision and you would like time to consider it.
- Determine the time frame you have in which to decide

WEIGHING THE OFFER

Weigh carefully the offer you receive against your researched criteria and other offers. Consider all factors, including:

- Salary (with or without overtime)
- Bonuses
- Retirement plans (and plan portability)
- Health care benefits (and how much you pay out of pocket)
- Vacation (and when you can start to use it)
- Training
- Tuition reimbursement
- Other benefits (e.g. company car, gas allowance, laptop, fitness center pass, etc.)

Question yourself about:

- **The Position** (e.g. Why is it available? What is your growth potential in this position? Do the daily work activities appeal to you?)
- **The Company** (e.g. Is the company growing or downsizing?)
- **Your Potential Supervisor** (e.g. How long has he/she been in this position? Do you think you can work well with this person? Realize this person has the power to make or break your experience.)

Multiple Offers, Accelerating Other Interviews and Continuing to Interview

- Call your contacts immediately to let them know you have another offer, that you are facing deadline pressure, but that you are very interested in their company, and is there any way they can accelerate their interview process?
- Be up front with all companies involved.
- Keep in mind that this could back fire on you.

THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Rules of Negotiating

1. You do not have to negotiate.
2. Negotiate with the hiring decision maker.
3. Focus on mutual gain.
4. Consider the very minimum you would be willing to accept.
5. Decide what you want, then prioritize.

Steps to Negotiating

1. Introduce all negotiating points:
 - "I am very excited about the possibility of working together and that there are [number] points I would like to talk about, including...."
 - Keep the number of requests reasonable.
 - Always start with salary first.
2. Rationally support your position by citing research and examples.
3. Negotiate:
 - Assume that the person will "split the difference."
 - Watch your negotiating partner closely for signs that you may be pushing too hard.
 - Be willing to give little things and unwilling to give up big ones.

Keys to Salary Negotiations

- Have a minimum salary figure in mind but *don't tell the employer*.
- Never be the first one to mention a salary figure:
 - On an application, write "open."
 - Answer the interview question, "What is the minimum you'll accept?" with:
"What is the salary range for this position?"
"I will consider any reasonable offer."
- When you hear the figure or range, repeat the figure or the top of the range, and then be quiet. You may encourage the employer to offer a higher salary.
 - If you are satisfied with the salary offer (e.g. it is above your minimum) accept it.
 - If it's too low, you can tell them it's too low. Counter their offer with your researched response.

DECISION TIME

- Once you decide to accept or reject an offer, it's best to send a written letter confirming your decision.
 - If you accept the offer, get all the agreed upon terms in writing.
 - Draft your own letter outlining the terms that have been agreed upon if necessary.
 - Don't use the word "contract."
 - If you reject the offer, keep your correspondence prompt and professional. Leave the company with a positive impression of you, since you may want to work for them in the future.
- Once you accept an offer you cannot accept another.
- Call and decline any other standing offers, and notify other companies that you are no longer on the market.
- Send a warm thank-you note to every person involved in your search.

REFERENCES

Bucknell University website 1999, George Washington University website 1999; David Jenson, 1995, [Job Offer Negotiation Strategies](#); Search Masters International ; Chapman, Jack, ["Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make \\$1000 a Minute"](#)