



The Center for Career and Professional Advising

Negotiating Job Offers

WHY IS NEGOTIATION IMPORTANT?

The salary of your first job will follow you to your next job. Therefore, negotiating your salary now can increase your long-term salary prospects. Benefits negotiation is also typical - more vacation time, relocation assistance, tuition reimbursement, etc. Negotiating doesn't hurt because you'll never get what you want unless you ask!

STEP ONE – THE OFFER

Congratulations on your job offer! It's time to evaluate the position and decide if it matches your interests, values, and goals. You may wish to determine how you feel about:

- ❖ The organization's vision, mission, and goals
- ❖ The day-to-day tasks involved with the position
- ❖ The working environment and people you will be working with (i.e., your prospective supervisor and co-workers)
- ❖ The salary, advancement possibilities, vacation, benefits (health, dental, retirement, further education, etc.)

If your offer is communicated via e-mail, respond immediately. You can follow the scripts below. Delaying your response may result in the employer rescinding the offer because they think you are uninterested. If the offer is given by phone, thank the employer, tell them you are very interested in the opportunity and would like to think it over and get back to them with your decision. You will also want to evaluate the employer-provided benefits, which can equal an additional 1/3 of your salary. Some employers will send a formal offer letter describing these benefits; if not, ask for this information in writing. If your mind goes blank when you receive your offer, consider scheduling a meeting with the employer to discuss it in more detail. This buys you time to think, research, and talk to people before you decide.

Sample Script

Employer: Hello Miriam! We enjoyed meeting you, think you'd be an excellent fit for our organization and would like to make you an offer for an editorial assistant position with an annual salary of \$58,000.

Miriam Response #1: Wonderful! I'm very interested in the position. I'd like some time to review the offer before making a decision. I have a few questions – is now a good time to talk or should we schedule a time within the next few days?

Miriam Response #2: This is exciting news! I'm very interested. I am interviewing with a few other firms and need some time to communicate with them before making a decision – can I get back to you with my decision in two weeks? (Note: employers will want your decision ASAP, but it is entirely reasonable for you to stall for time while you are concluding your search – the next step, of course, is to call/e-mail all the other employers you have applied to, tell them you have an offer and ask where you are in their application process.)

STEP TWO - RESEARCH

Get all the data from friends and recent grads searching or currently employed in your field. Another key consideration is the cost of living in the area – make sure you know how a \$58,000 offer in Philadelphia compares to a similar offer in NY, DC, etc. Use resources such as salary.com, payscale.com, O*Net, LinkedIn Salary Tool, and GlassDoor to understand market rates for the position. When you've finished your research, you're ready to negotiate.

Sample Script

Miriam: Hello, this is Miriam from Haverford College. Is now a good time to talk? Again, I'm very interested in the offer you extended for an editorial assistant position with your organization, and I have a few questions to discuss.

Employer: Of course! It's good to hear from you.

Miriam: In reviewing salary and cost of living data for similar positions in the NY area, I found the salary you're offering -- \$58,000 -- is a bit below the average. Is the salary negotiable?

Employer: I'm surprised you found our salary was below average -- how so?

Miriam: My research showed the range for editorial positions in NY is \$63,000-\$65,000. For example, XYZ Publishing pays \$64,000. Please understand that I am very interested in your organization and will add value to your company starting day one. (Note: Employees earn money because they add value to an organization. You should respectfully reiterate how you will benefit the company and not just that you need the money.)

Employer: I understand. Have you reviewed our benefits package yet? We are very competitive in this area, and our benefits compensate for any slight salary differential.

Miriam: Your benefits package is excellent -- thank you for forwarding that information. Robert in HR was invaluable in explaining the details about the benefits. Of course, I understand if the salary is fixed, but I hope you will consider an increase.

Employer Response #1: This is unusual, but let me return this to my manager and see what I can do. I'll be back in touch by the end of the week. (Note: at that stage, be aware that the employer will typically expect you to accept their offer if they meet your negotiation request.)

Miriam: Thank you for understanding my concerns and being willing to consider this option. I look forward to hearing back.

Employer Response #2: We've established a fixed salary for our editorial assistant positions to ensure equity among our entry-level hires. The cost of living in NY is very high, and I want to respond to your concerns. You should know that we evaluate all of our entry-level employees after their three-month probationary period and again after six months when you are eligible for a merit-based increase. One area where we have some flexibility is relocation assistance -- we can offer up to \$1,000 to help you relocate to NY, which can be used to pay for moving and apartment rental expenses. Would this be helpful to you? (Note: Employers unable to negotiate salaries can often negotiate in other areas, including relocation, a signing bonus, vacation, and benefits eligibility.)

Miriam: Absolutely! I understand and respect your concerns about equity. As a new resident of NY, relocation assistance would be incredibly helpful. Thank you for our conversation -- I'd like some time to review this. When do you need my decision?

STEP THREE -- THE DECISION

In the final analysis, salary is only one part of your job. Make sure this job is the right fit for you by asking yourself:

- Will this job help me develop new skills?
- Does this job increase my marketability or place me in a narrow niche?
- Does my boss have the makings of a good mentor?
- How will I be evaluated?
- Is the work culture a good fit? Do people seem happy working here?
- Is there a structured training program? If not, how is training offered?
- What are my monthly costs? (rent, student loans, travel, food, etc.)

Notify the employer about your decision by email or by phone. If declining an offer, thank the employer for their interest and explain your reason, but you don't need to provide detailed information. If accepting the offer, indicate your enthusiasm for the position, establish your start date, and check to see if there are any papers you need to sign.

Once you verbally accept an offer, do not go back on your word, even if your dream offer finally comes through. The world is small, and people within the same industry often know each other. They may talk about how a potential hire like you wronged them.) Additionally, organizations will likely drop Haverford College as a recruiting partner when candidates renege on offers. Always negotiate and accept offers with integrity. For support in negotiating job offers, meet with a CCPA Advisor; schedule through Handshake: <https://app.joinhandshake.com/appointments>.