

EXPRESS YOUR ENTHUSIASM

Convey your excitement about the offer and working for the institution. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious, and you want the employer to remain enthusiastic about you during negotiations.

ASK FOR TIME TO CONSIDER THE OFFER

Never accept a position on the spot. You'll be too focused on the excitement of getting the offer to make a well-informed decision. Take at least 24 hours to consider the offer (more if possible). If the salary is substantially lower than you can accept, indicate this when the offer is made. But, remember to be professional in your conversation.

For example: *"I was extremely impressed with XYZ institution during my on-campus interview and would really like to work here. I will consider your offer carefully, but I do want to let you know I'm concerned about the salary you quoted. While taking time to consider the offer, it would help to know if there is any flexibility in the compensation package."*

If the salary you are offered is higher than you expected, don't be hasty about accepting the position. Take time to consider the offer and look at the entire salary and benefits package. Take time to reflect. You may have underestimated your worth. Or, it could be that this position entails some additional responsibilities that you didn't consider. Review the job description and ask for clarification on any vague points.

ASK FOR DETAILS

If the employer doesn't provide information about the complete compensation package (retirement plans, insurance benefits, vacations, paid holidays, overtime policies, etc.), you need to request this information. In order for you to make an informed decision, you need to have all the facts.

Consider saying something like *"As I'm considering this offer, it will help me to have information on benefits other than the salary. Could we please take some time to discuss that information?"* If necessary, ask for the name of the person in human resources who can provide you with more detailed information on this subject matter.

EVALUATE THE OFFER

Look at the total compensation package, not just the salary. Take into consideration all expenses that may be associated with the position:

- What will be your approximate commuting costs?
- If you have children to consider, what will your child care expenses be?
- If the job requires relocating, take into your relocation expense and the cost of living in that geographic area.

Evaluate the personal and professional satisfaction you will get from this position:

- Does the position fit in with your long-term career plans?
- Do you have a reasonable chance of being successful?
- How many hours will you be spending on the job?
- What, if anything, are you giving up to take this position?
- Will you enjoy the culture and climate of the institution?
- Does the institution value its employees?
- How is professional development supported?

DETERMINE YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Determine the minimum compensation package you will accept. Then, create a wish list of the salary and benefits you wish to receive above your bottom line. This is what you will request during negotiation. Remember to keep requests reasonable.

ACCEPT, DECLINE, OR START NEGOTIATING

At the agreed upon time, contact the employer to inform him/her of your decision.

- If you agree to accept the offer as it stands, simply state that you have decided to accept the offer and are excited about this opportunity.
- If you decide not to accept the position, be polite and professional in declining the offer. This particular position may not have been right for you, but future opportunities at the same institution may become available.
- If you want to negotiate for a better deal, start the process: *“I have carefully considered this offer and want to reiterate my interest in joining the staff at XYZ institution. However, I do have some concerns about the compensation package that I’d like to discuss...”*

STANDARD REASONS FOR NOT INCREASING THE COMPENSATION PACKAGE

“That’s more than we allocated for the position.”

Convince the employer to consider revising the current budget allocation for this position. You can respond by stating: *“The position seems to fit well with my experience and interest, but the salary is below other employers in the area. Although I would really like to accept this position, I just can’t justify doing so for less than the market rate which is between \$28,000 and \$34,000.”*

“You would be earning more than others at your level.”

You can try to persuade the employer that you should earn more because you’re worth more; however, this can be difficult in your first professional position out of graduate school. You can suggest you be given a different job title to justify the higher salary. You can offer to assume additional responsibilities to compensate for the higher pay. This is difficult to accomplish, because employers are hesitant to fool with job titles and salaries once they’ve been assigned.

“That’s all our budget will allow.”

The institution may simply not be able to provide a higher salary. Try to get some indication from the employer when he/she expects the budget situation to improve.

“That’s too much more than your previous salary.”

Some employers will try to base the salary offer on how much you made in a previous position. Educate the employer that your previous salary is irrelevant because the value of your last job has nothing to do with the value of this new position. You can respond by indicating you’ve recently obtained your master’s degree and are seeking a position with greater responsibilities. You may also respond by stating *“I am paid much less in my current position. However, as you’re probably aware, I am underpaid in that position. That’s one of the reasons I am exploring other employment options. I wouldn’t want to accept anything less than fair market value for a new position.”*

“I’m sorry, but it’s our policy not to negotiate.”

Doing your research is important. If you know this in advance from your networking contacts and other professionals in the field, then negotiating will probably not work.