

# Navigating Job Offers

Entering the job market can be both exciting and daunting, particularly when it comes to navigating and negotiating job offers.

In this tipsheet, you will learn:

- the components of a job offer
- how to prepare to negotiate job offers, including salaries, and some negotiation tips
- how to respond to a job offer

## Components of a Job Offer

A job offer is more than "you've got the job"—it's **a legal agreement between you and the employer** when the terms are accepted by both parties. While job offers can be verbal, having a written offer (often in the form of an employment contract) is crucial. A written offer clearly outlines the details of your employment and serves as a legal document, providing you with protection while holding the employer accountable.

How a job offer is written can vary. However, they commonly include:

- Job details, including job title, duties and responsibilities, and reporting structure
- Key dates, including start date, probationary period and end date (if a fixed contract)
- How the employer or employee can end the working relationship
- Compensation and benefits, including salary, bonuses (e.g. signing or annual bonus), health benefits etc.
- Restrictions and contingencies (e.g. a non-compete clause or requirement to have/maintain certification with a licensing body)

When you receive an offer, the employer must provide you with sufficient time to review it. It is important to ask for clarification on any terms if needed. In addition, the job offer must comply with relevant legislation. In Ontario, the legislation that governs minimum standards is the Employment Standards Act; other legislation (i.e. Ontario Human Rights Code) may also play a role in your employment relationship. Make sure you are familiar with your legal rights regarding your employment.

## Negotiating the Job Offer

When you receive a job offer, it is important to respond expressing gratitude and to ask for time to consider the offer. Some job offers will have little or no room for negotiations, while other employers might expect you to negotiate. Negotiating a job offer not only helps ensure that you receive fair compensation and benefits that reflect your skills and experience but also can improve job satisfaction and financial well-being.

You do not have to negotiate an offer. However, if you choose to negotiate, preparing can help you advocate for yourself and feel more confident.

**Consider the areas for negotiation:** Organizations often have flexibility to negotiate parts of the job offer. The areas where there is the most flexibility tend to be around start-date, salary, and bonuses (if applicable). Other areas may include moving allowance, vacation and sick time, travel compensation, professional development opportunities, flexible work, and housing. These are dependent on how an organization is structured, workflow, and budgets. Understanding these constraints can help you identify where there is room to negotiate.

**Gather information from the employer:** Ask open-ended questions that allow you to gauge where there is room for negotiations. Questions you might ask are:

- Can you tell me more about the flexibility of the start date?
- Are there opportunities to negotiate the benefits package?
- What options are available for professional development and growth?
- How does the company handle relocation assistance for new hires?
- What is the company's policy on remote work or flexible hours?
- How does the company support work-life balance for its employees?
- Are there options for negotiating additional vacation or personal days?
- What are the typical paths for advancement and salary increases here?

**Research:** Use online resources to research salary information (see Resources below). Many websites will provide detailed salary information based on a variety of factors such as profession, location, and skill level. Use salary information from organizations that post this information publicly (i.e. within their job postings) to assess an offer and your expectations. Use your network with knowledge of the organization or profession to understand salary standards within an industry.

**Understand your skills and experience:** Before negotiating a job offer, it is important to understand and reflect on your skills, knowledge, and experience. Consider how your background aligns with the job requirements and how your contributions can benefit the organization. This self-awareness can help you articulate your strengths and justify your expectations during negotiations.

**Negotiate:** Once you have gathered the necessary information, request a meeting to discuss the offer. While you can also negotiate via email, this method may take longer and it can limit your ability to observe reactions. There may be several conversations/emails to clarify expectations. When you are ready to negotiate an offer:

- Prepare your key message and practice with family or friends
- Don't focus exclusively on salary
- Know your bottom line (what is the minimum you will accept)
- Be realistic in your expectations
- Be prepared to compromise
- Be open to alternative options
- Emphasize your value
- Stay professional and positive

Negotiation is a discussion. You may come to some agreement during the conversation, but there is no requirement that you commit to a “yes” or “no” during the negotiation. Once you have clarified the details of the job offer, **get everything in writing**, and request a short period of time to review the revised offer before you respond.

## Responding to the Job Offer

Deciding on whether to accept an offer can be challenging, particularly if you have multiple offers. With each offer, consider:

- Personal and professional priorities
- Long-term career impact
- Work-life balance
- If you are having trouble making a decision or would like support, make an appointment with a Career Coach through MyCareer and/or refer to the *Decision Making Worksheet: [Career Support and Tips](#) | [Career Services \(queensu.ca\)](#)*

### Accepting the offer:

If you are accepting the offer:

- Start with a thank you to express your gratitude for the opportunity,
- Clearly state your acceptance of the offer,
- Confirm key details,
- End on a positive note, expressing enthusiasm for joining the team.

### Sample Acceptance Email

To:	carol.brown@engco.ca
Subject:	Acceptance of Job Offer Jessie Pierce
Dear Carol,	
I am very happy to accept the position of Junior Mechanical Designer with EngCo. Thank you very much for this opportunity.	
As we discussed, my start date will be September 2 with a starting salary of \$72,000/year, a signing bonus of \$2,000-, and 4-weeks' vacation/year. As you mentioned, these details will be clarified in a formal contract, which I will sign once I get it.	
I look forward to working with EngCo and joining the amazing Engineering Design team.	
Please let me know if you require any additional information from me.	
Sincerely,	
Jessie Pierce <a href="mailto:jessie.pierce@universityplace.ca">jessie.pierce@universityplace.ca</a>	

## Declining the offer:

Declining a job offer can be challenging, but it is important to handle it professionally to maintain a positive relationship with the employer. Here are some tips to consider:

- Be prompt in your response once you've made your decision.
- Express your gratitude for the offer and the opportunity.
- Provide a brief reason (optional) but avoid going into too much detail.
- Keep the door open for future opportunities by maintaining a positive tone.

### *Sample Declining Email*

To:	carol.brown@engco.ca
Subject:	Job Offer Jessie Pierce
<p>Dear Carol,</p> <p>Thank you very much for the offer of the position of Junior Mechanical Designer with EngCo. After some consideration, I have decided to decline the offer. At this point, I have chosen to remain in the Kingston area to be closer to my family.</p> <p>I truly appreciate the opportunity and the time you spent with me during the interview process. I hope that we can stay in touch and perhaps work together in the future.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Jessie Pierce <a href="mailto:jessie.pierce@universityplace.ca">jessie.pierce@universityplace.ca</a></p>	

## After Accepting an Offer

Once you accept an offer:

- Promptly **notify other employers** who were considering you that you have accepted an offer and wish to withdraw from consideration
- Sign the employment contract
- Complete any pre-employment requirements (i.e. a security screening)
- Inform your current employer by giving the appropriate notice (typically two weeks)
- Prepare for your new role and plan your transition
- Update your professional profile
- Celebrate your success!

Navigating job offers is a skill that you will use throughout your career. Through research and preparation, you can advocate for yourself, make informed decisions, and secure a position that not only aligns with your goals, but where your skills and expertise are recognized and valued.

## Resources

Government of Canada, Job Bank: <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Glassdoor: <https://www.glassdoor.ca/Salaries/index.htm>

Ontario Public Sector Salary Disclosure: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-sector-salary-disclosure>

Statistics Canada, Employment Income:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810041201>

Statistics Canada, Employee Wages by Occupation:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410041701>

Ontario Labour Market: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market#explore-labour-market-by-region>

Robert Half Salary Guide: <https://www.roberthalf.com/ca/en/insights/salary-guide>

Simply Hired, Salary Estimator: <https://www.simplyhired.ca/salaries>

Ziprecruiter Salary Database (provides local information): <https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries>