

# Job Offers

When you receive a job offer, you will of course be excited by and pleased at your success—and you should be! Even if you receive what seems to be a great offer, do not be tempted to accept the position without considering your options. It is important that you accept a position for the right reasons to increase the chances you will be satisfied over the long term.

## Considering the Offer

Cornell Career Services has policies that require employers to give you a reasonable amount of time to make your decision about an offer of employment. You can see the full offer policies at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu). Come in to see a CDO Career Counselor if you need help with this process.

Evaluate your choices objectively relative to **your own** personal/professional goals: what is right for you is not necessarily right for someone else. For most entry-level positions, the work itself, the level of responsibility, and the opportunity for learning new skills should be weighed more heavily than the initial salary. Advancement opportunities can make an initial salary differential negligible within just a few years.

Many students find it helpful to create a list of the “pros” and “cons” of a job opportunity, considering factors such as work environment, organization culture, and compensation:

### Work Environment/Culture

- Comfort level with supervisor and potential colleagues.
- Formal training program and educational opportunities.
- Amount of travel required.
- Typical career path after the first or second year.
- Long-term advancement opportunities.
- Location of other branches of the organization.
- Opportunity/requirement to relocate.
- Job security.

### Compensation Package

- Starting salary.
- Fringe benefits package, including health insurance, retirement contributions, tuition reimbursement, etc.

- Comparative salary and cost of living information (if choosing between offers).
- Vacation and other leave-with-pay time.
- Salary review schedule for the first performance review and possible salary increase.
- Signing bonus, if offered.
- Relocation stipend, if offered
- Spousal/partner assistance in locating a new position, if offered
- Stock options, if applicable.

### Other Factors

- Employer reputation and stability.
- Job-related expenses, such as formal business attire and transportation.
- Availability of safe, convenient, and affordable housing.
- Facilities and working conditions.
- Distance from family and friends.
- Cultural, athletic, and entertainment activities in the local community.
- Any “catches,” such as a restrictive non-competition clause.

## Negotiating a Salary Package

Do not assume that you are expected to negotiate a higher salary. For some industries, such as investment banking, base salary offers from on-campus recruiting for undergraduates are not negotiable. Those employers have large entry-level “classes” and want to start all first-year employees on equal footing.

On the other hand, it is not considered impolite or unprofessional to negotiate if you have legitimate reasons for requesting reconsideration of one or more terms of an offer. Just make sure you have all the information you need to negotiate effectively. If the salary is fair, it is better to negotiate on other issues, such as a signing bonus.

Negotiate with facts, not feelings. A statement such as “I have had three internships in the field and will have a shorter learning curve than other new hires” is far more effective than “I feel that I am more qualified than the average student.” You may be more qualified, but that is probably why the employer is offering you a position!

If you decide to negotiate on salary, you will need to suggest a salary range based on how your industry rates in national salary surveys. Be prepared to accept the low end of that range. Use the following resources, adjusting for inflation from the time of the survey to the present:

- Postgraduate surveys of Cornellians, available on the CDO website.
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Salary Survey, available in the CDO library in Roberts Hall.
- Salary calculators, cost of living, and relocation expense estimates available through websites such as salary.com.

## Delaying Your Response

Make sure you learn from the employer when you need to respond to a job offer. Depending on the time of year, most organizations will allow you at least a few weeks, and sometimes even a few months, to make your decision. If that decision date approaches before you complete the interviewing process for other positions you are considering, you can ask for an extension. Do not wait until the last minute to request an extension, though, and provide a specific date by which you will have your final decision. (See the sample e-mail requesting an extension of time to respond below.)

### Sample E-mail Requesting a Response Delay

Date: November 2, 2009  
To: email address@employer  
From: your email address  
Subject Line: Extension Request

Dear Ms. Bedell:

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Morgan Stanley as an Investment Banking Analyst. I am most appreciative of your offer and am very interested in the position. At the same time, I have committed to several organizations for second interviews, and would like to see these through to completion.

I am writing to request a delay in my response date until December 1 to be able to collect all the information I need to reach this important decision.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Ithacara Cornell

In general, employers are likely to be more generous in offering time extensions during the fall semester, and are more conservative during the spring semester.

## Responding to an Offer

On or before your decision date, you should verbally inform the employer of your decision on the offer and follow up on your conversation with a well-written confirmation letter.

### Accepting an Offer

Express your enthusiasm to be joining the organization and reiterate salary, start date, and position title. Specify when you will meet any conditions of employment, such as completing a medical exam or providing required documents.

### Declining an Offer

Thank the employer for extending you an offer. Explain that you are accepting an offer that better matches your needs or desires at this time. Keep the door open for future associations with the firm.

## Protecting Your Good Name

Accepting a job offer means that you have concluded your job search with a commitment to join the organization. Once you submit your letter of acceptance, you should withdraw from all pending job-search activity. If you are tempted to accept an offer and continue hunting for a “better offer,” that should be a signal to you that something about the offer is not right for you and you should not accept it. Remember, the way you handle such decisions reflects your values, priorities, and ethical/professional conduct and will contribute to your professional reputation. Employers have been known to withdraw offers when they learn that new hires are continuing the job search. In addition, your behavior affects future relationships between the employer and Cornell.