GUIDE TO

ACCEPTING THE JOB

FIRST STEPS
✓ Evaluate all aspects of the job offer including salary, benefits, the starting and/or ending date, and the details of the position itself
✓ Know your goals and values before entering a job negotiation

BEING OFFERED THE JOB

Once a company has completed its interviewing process, they will be prepared to extend a job offer. Examine these positions/companies thoroughly and with caution. Agree to a response date and then clarify the various components of the offer. Make sure to ask about:

- The position itself
- Starting date
- Opportunities for advancement
- Compensation for moving costs
- Salary and signing bonus
- Benefits

Take some time to evaluate the offer. If the offer does not match your needs in some areas, negotiate!

EVALUATING THE OFFER

Job Specifics

The position itself. Make sure that you are familiar with the position you are being offered, including the required training, job tasks, environment, advancement opportunities, benefits, and location.

Starting date. Though the company may want you to begin working right away, be sure that you have enough time to recover from school, move, and settle in.

Money

Salary. Research the appropriate salary range for someone with your level of experience, degree, etc., in your chosen field.

- [http://www.rileyguide.com](http://www.rileyguide.com)
- [http://www.salaryexpert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com)
- [http://www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
- [http://www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)

Compensation for moving costs. Be sure to ask if the organization reimburses for moving expenses.

Signing bonus. Depending on the industry you are in, a signing bonus may or may not be negotiable.
Benefits

Benefits packages vary widely by employer and industry. You can attempt to negotiate, although not all benefits will be negotiable. For more details, visit [http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch](http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch).

- **Medical Insurance.** Most likely, you will be offered either a PPO (Preferred Provider Option) or HMO (Health Maintenance Organization), both of which have costs and benefits. Pay attention to your deductible, co-pays, and enrollment restrictions.
- **Dental Insurance.** Dental insurance varies in what visits and procedures are covered and to what extent. Your coverage for preventative, surgical, and orthodontic care may be different.
- **Optical/Eye Care Insurance.** Look at which expenses are covered, what the deductibles are, and what the annual and lifetime maximums are. Exams, eyeglasses, and contact lenses may or may not be covered.
- **Life Insurance.** The main purpose of life insurance is to provide financial assistance to your family should something happen to you. In determining your family’s life insurance needs, consider your dependents and what quality of life you would like them to have.
- **Accidental Death Insurance.** Some companies will provide more money if your death occurs due to an accident.
- **Disability Insurance.** Disability is divided into short-term disability (which can include an allocation for sick pay) and long-term disability (which kicks in at six months to a year).
- **Vacation & Holidays.** Companies vary in how many vacation days are given to employees and how they accumulate; new employees generally allocated around 2 weeks. If vacation days are not used, they may accrue, be lost, or you could be paid for them.
- **Sick/Personal Days.** Companies vary in the amount of days offered to employees.
- **401(k), 403(b), and 457 Plans.** These are tax-deferred retirement plans. The 401(k) plan is used by most private companies and the company may match what you put in. The 403(b) and 457 plans are generally not matched and are used by educational or charitable organizations and state or local governments, respectively.
- **Pension Plans.** Your employer will usually put an amount of money into an account for you and it accumulates over time. This is another form of retirement account.
- **Profit Sharing.** This allows you to receive a share of the profit your company makes, usually in the form of stocks or stock options.
- **Stock Options/ESOPs.** This allows you to purchase company stock at a discount.
- **Tuition Reimbursement.** Some companies will help pay for tuition if you want to pursue advanced degrees while working for them.
- **Health Clubs.** Some companies now offer free or reduced-rate memberships at health clubs or have on-site facilities for their employees.
- **Dependent Care.** This may include providing on-site childcare at your office or allocating amounts for childcare and elder care. Although some companies may not directly pay these costs, they may offer programs for allocating child care funds from pretax funds.
- **Employee Assistance Programs.** These programs are designed to aid employees in need of assistance, which may include financial planning and tax assistance, but can also include various types of crisis support.
- **Overtime/Travel Premiums/Comp Time.** Some companies offer overtime or bonus pay, additional pay for hours worked while out-of-town, and/or comp time (which allows you to receive extra time off for extra the time you work).
- **Parking Reimbursement.** Your company may help you with the cost of parking.
- **Expense Reimbursement.** Most employers will reimburse you for business-related costs, but the procedures in doing so may vary.
- **Maternity/Paternity Leave.** Most companies offer paid leave for parents around the time of their child’s birth or during the adoption process.
- **Flex Time.** You may be able to negotiate special work conditions, like working from home.
- **Professional Development.** You may be able to negotiate for the opportunity to engage in professional development opportunities, such as attending a conference or professional workshop. Sometimes employers will fund these experiences or allow you to take the necessary time off of work to participate.
**Making the Decision**

**Negotiating the Offer**

- **When/how to negotiate.** It will be difficult to negotiate after you have accepted an offer. Be up front about your non-negotiable points. Be aware of what the employer can and cannot negotiate. Often, the employer cannot negotiate on company policies like vacation or the dental plan, but they may be able to negotiate your salary or flex time.

- **If you don't ask for it, you won't get it.** The first offer the employer extends you may be the minimum they will give to have you as an employee. They may not volunteer to offer more benefits or a higher salary unless you ask. They also can't read your mind - ask for what you want (within reason).

- **Know the facts.** Researching salary ranges and typical benefits in your field will help you determine what is reasonable and fair. Be logical with your requests, but be firm with what you are and are not willing to accept.

- **Make them want you.** You will hold more ground in negotiation if you've already proven that you're a hard worker and willing to go the distance. Arrive early for all interviews and appointments, get information about drug tests, physicals, or background checks to the employer as soon as possible, and ask what else you can do. Remember to act in a professional manner.

- **Don't show your hand too early.** When negotiating topics like salary, never be the first to mention a figure as it weakens your negotiating position. If the employer asks you for a starting salary figure, ask them for the typical salary range for that position. You can then evaluate that range based on the salary research you have done. If that doesn't work, you should already have a figure in mind that you can justify. You will have a stronger position if you negotiate on what you are worth using your research than if you rely on what you need to pay your bills.

- **Beware sharing competing offers with the employer.** Proceed with caution. You may get a better offer or you may have your offer rescinded.

- **Get it in writing.** Be sure to get your final offer in writing from your employer.

- **Don't over-negotiate.** Assuming you take the job, you will be working with the person with whom you are negotiating. Don't start your job off on the wrong foot by being overly aggressive.

### Accepting the Offer

- Once you and the employer have reached an agreement on a job offer, it is time to formally accept the position. In the acceptance letter or email, specify the job you are accepting and the name of your supervisor.

- Review your starting salary, basic job responsibilities, and the date you will start work.

- If the job is more formal, you may want to type the letter and print it on nice paper like résumé paper.

- If you have primarily been communicating with the employer via email or some other electronic source, stay consistent and keep to this mode. However, remember to still use professional language and to cover all important points.

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**Today's Date**

Truman T. Tiger  
123 Any Street  
Columbia, Missouri 65201  
(573) 555-5555

Mr. Joe Smith  
Director, Mascots R Us  
123 Anywhere Drive  
Anywhere, Anystate 00000

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for the offer of Head Mascot in Columbia, Missouri. As we discussed, I am delighted to accept your offer to join the staff of Mascots R Us. To review our conversation, I will be starting at Mascots R Us on August 17 at an annual base salary of $25,000 and will receive a review after six months. My primary duties will include receiving and reviewing award applications, and I will be reporting to Suzy Que. Upon relocating to Columbia, I will contact you to see what materials I may need before August 17. Please let me know if you need any more information from me before that time.

Again, thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,

Truman T. Tiger
Declining the Offer

If you decide that a position or job offer is not for you, you should formally decline the offer in writing. When declining a job offer, tactfully state your reasons for not accepting the job. It is beneficial to convey your appreciation for the interview and the employer’s time because you may want to work for them in the future. Remain professional as you are highlighting your decision to pursue other opportunities. Try not to burn bridges.

Being Rejected By An Employer

Unfortunately, you probably will not be offered every position you apply for. Just because you were not right for a position at one time does not mean that you cannot reapply in the future. One way to show your genuine interest in a company is to respond personally to rejection letters. By responding, you will give a positive impression of yourself, and the employer will be more likely to keep you in mind should future openings occur.

NEXT STEPS

- Come to the MU Career Center to talk with someone about your job offer and negotiation skills.
- Visit our Handouts link on http://career.missouri.edu/resources to download other handouts in our Job Search series.