

NEGOTIATING A JOB OFFER

THE OFFER'S ON THE TABLE ... NOW WHAT?

The organization or company you've been interviewing with has made you an offer. Before you say yes, consider:

- Do you have a written job offer complete with a start date, report location, job title, salary, and benefits package?
 - Do you have a clear sense of your role, including your supervisor's name and the team you'll be working with?
 - Is this job the one that you want?
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CLARIFY

If there is anything that is unclear, your first step is to clarify the offer. Ask to speak with a representative from the human resources department (HR) or set up a meeting with your recruiter to address your questions. For smaller organizations, make an appointment to discuss your questions with the point person on the hiring team.

1. **Salary:** Salaries are binary; either there is room to negotiate or there isn't. Unless the organization has stated up front that the salary is non-negotiable, you won't know until you try. However, do not enter into salary negotiations until you are certain you are interested in this job.
2. **Retirement Plans:** A truly professional, post-graduate full-time position should be retirement-plan eligible. It is quite possible that there will be a one-, three- or five-year vesting period during which you may contribute but the company you're working for will not. Many tech jobs come with stock options. Even though retirement seems a long way off and stock options are a little like lottery tickets, take your time to understand what all of this means.
3. **Health and Wellness:** Health insurance, vision and dental benefits, long- and short-term disability insurance, sick leave, vacation, and days off are all typically pre-determined. Some things you might want to take into consideration:
 - Are you on your family's insurance and planning to stay until you're 26 (U.S. students)?
 - Does the benefit package measurably increase your salary?
 - Does the organization have a long, stable history with the benefits providers or do they jump around?
 - Are there choices? Can you customize your benefits packages, and whatever your monthly premiums might be, to suit your needs?
4. **Location:** Is the job onsite or remote? If you need to move for the job, will the company provide moving assistance? Have you looked into the cost of living in the new location? Does the company operate in numerous locations and could your role be transferred? Is your salary dependent on location??
5. **Contract negotiations group:** It might surprise you that some professional positions are in a contract negotiations group or union. If so, are there dues? Have you been offered a chance to speak with a representative from the group? Where would you be in terms of the contract period? What have negotiations been like in the past?

HELPFUL TIPS

- **Salary Specific:** If you suspect that the salary/compensation package you're being offered is too low, begin with something like, "I am very interested in the position, but the salary seems a little off the standard range in the industry for this role." Make certain you've done your research so that if the response is *Why do you say that?* or *Why, what do you want to be paid?* you'll be ready with a clear answer: "Based on my research, it seems that post-graduate data science roles like this pay in the range of X to Y." Give a wide-enough range so that the low- and mid-points are attractive.

Never say "I want" or otherwise make demands. Be sure to negotiate in good faith and from a position of careful research.
 - **Timeline:** Be certain you've established a timeline for your response. This is especially important if you're in the interviewing process for any other jobs.
 - **Negotiate in Good Faith:** Don't step into negotiations regarding a job you don't think you want. Find out how much time you have to respond and consider your other opportunities. If you tell one recruiter/job opportunity that you have got a competitive offer from another job, be transparent and honest.
 - **Non-tangibles Might Be Negotiable:** If the salary is fixed, you might be able to negotiate a signing bonus, relocation expenses, vacation days, tuition support for a graduate degree, or other perks that would make the job more attractive to you.
 - **Don't burn professional bridges:** When you make a commitment to a job, you need to honor that contract.
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RESOURCES

Glassdoor: There are a number of online resources like this one that might give you ballpark information about the salary range for your job.

Goin' Global: View country and U.S. city guides with career information, including H1B employer listings, corporate profiles, and career resources for 40 countries. .

"Salary Negotiation: Make More Money, Be More Valued," by Patrick McKenzie is 7000 words (!) devoted to the fine art of negotiating a tech job salary. Find it on his blog at kalzumeus.com.

LinkedIn: Visit the Find Alumni page under the Grinnell College School page to review alumni profiles. Conduct an informal interview with a Grinnell alum in your industry.

Grinnell Connect: Connect with Grinnell College alumni who have indicated they are willing and eager to help you.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Promotion and Advancement: It's not too soon to discuss the career path available within the company. Some questions you might ask include: Do most employees get promoted? What is the typical timeline? What are the criteria for promotion?

Evaluation: How is your performance evaluated, by whom, and over what intervals?

Onboarding: What will your initial work days look like? What kind of support and training will you receive?

Equipment: For remote work, will the company be providing you with a computer? Office supplies? Furniture? In person, what is your workspace like?

Wellness: Are there wellness initiatives in place?

Meetings: Are you a member of a team or a pod? Will you be involved in "all hands" meetings? What percentage of your week will be meetings versus independent work time? Will you have regular check-ins with your immediate supervisor?