



CONSIDERING OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT: HOW TO ACCEPT OR DECLINE

You've received an offer – congratulations! Now you have to decide whether you want to accept it. You are strongly encouraged to meet with a career counselor to address any questions or concerns you have about accepting the offer. Below are some tips for fielding an offer, analyzing whether to accept it, and communicating your decision.

FIELDING AN OFFER

Offers can be extended in various ways. Some employers will call you with the good news, and follow up with an offer letter. Others may convey the offer via a letter or an email. You may be contacted by the employer's recruiting department, or one of the attorneys with whom you interviewed.

- Refrain from answering your phone if you are in a loud or otherwise inconvenient place and suspect that it is an employer calling. Let the employer leave a voicemail, and make sure to return the phone call *promptly* – *i.e.*, within the same day if possible. Have a pen and paper on hand when you listen to the message and return the employer's call so that you can take note of important information.
- Make sure that your voicemail is professional, *e.g.*, state your name clearly and let the caller know that you are unavailable to take the call and will return it as soon as possible.
- If the employer leaves a substantive message with an offer (rather just asking you to return their call), it is important that you return their call as soon as possible to acknowledge receipt of the offer and express your gratitude.
- If you reach the employer's voicemail upon returning their call, leave a clear, professional message that includes your name and contact information:
 - **Example 1:** "Hello, this is [first and last name] from USF returning your call. I'm sorry I missed your call, and hope that we can connect this afternoon. I will be in class from 1:30 – 3:00 PM, but am otherwise available. I can be reached at (415) 123-4567. I very much look forward to speaking to you. Again, this is [first name, last name] at (415) 123-4567. Thank you."
 - **Example 2:** "Hello, this is [first and last name] from USF returning your call. I was so thrilled to receive your message with the good news earlier today. I look forward to speaking with you further, and can be reached at (415) 123-4567 any time this afternoon. If I don't hear back from you before the end of the day, I will try giving you another call. Again, this is [first and last name] from USF at (415) 123-4567. Thank you."

- When you receive an offer, do not feel compelled to accept on the spot! Rather, thank the employer and express your excitement: “Thank you! I’m thrilled, you’ve made my day. When shall I get back to you?” Or, “Thank you! I’m very excited about this opportunity. Will I receive a letter in the mail with the details of the offer?” **Wait until you receive written confirmation of an offer before accepting it. It is best to wait until you receive the actual offer letter with the salary, start date, and additional details so you can review the employment details for accuracy.**
- Make note of the date that you received the offer, and/or that your decision is due. If it is a NALP employer, be mindful of the 45-day rule that determines the deadline for your response. Consult a career counselor if you have any questions regarding when you need to respond, as you do not want to lose an opportunity.

DECIDING WHETHER TO ACCEPT THE OFFER

Deciding whether to accept an offer – or accept one offer over another – is a personal choice for everyone. OCP encourages you to meet with a career counselor to help you with your decision-making process, including gathering additional information about the offer, and performing self-assessment, as needed:

1. GATHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Seek OCP’s help in identifying other students who have previously worked for the employer, and alumni who currently work for the employer. It is often helpful to speak with previous law clerks or alums to get a candid, “inside scoop” on the employer.
- Now is the time to ask more difficult questions of the employer. Clarify any questions you may have that you were reluctant to ask before receiving an offer. You may choose to confirm information you have gathered from the employer’s NALP form, such as the salary, billable hours, and benefits.
- Call the recruiting department and ask to meet with additional junior associates about their experience at the employer. Or, you may want to speak further with attorneys in a specific practice area or on a certain committee (*e.g., pro bono committee, diversity committee, women’s forum, etc.*).

2. DO SELF-ASSESSMENT

- How does the offer for employment fit into your long-term plans?
- Consider how the offer aligns with your employment priorities. Priorities will be different for everyone. Some may include salary, practice groups, size of firm, exposure to clients, billable hours, lifestyle, “fit” within the firm culture, prestige, location, work environment, training, and level of responsibility.

ACCEPTING THE OFFER

If you have carefully considered your written offer and are prepared to accept it, you are ready to contact the employer with the good news.

- Typically, the written offer instructs you how to accept the offer – *e.g.*, call the recruiting department or the hiring partner, and send in a signed acceptance. If you do not have specific instructions, call the person who extended the offer and orally accept, then follow up with written acceptance.
- Once you have accepted your offer, you should expeditiously notify any additional employers who have extended you offers or interview invitations. You may call the recruiting department or attorney who extended the offer/ invitation. Thank them for the opportunity, and inform them that you have accepted another offer of employment. The employer may ask where you have decided to go, and/or what made you decide to decline the offer for their own information gathering (*i.e.*, who are their competitors, what they can do to improve their interview process, etc.). Depending on your situation, you may choose to let them know where you have decided to accept, or you may let them know you have not yet accepted elsewhere but have decided to pursue other options, and did not want to hold onto an offer that would be a better fit for someone else.

DECLINING AN OFFER

If you have carefully considered your written offer and have decided to decline it, it is best to do so as soon as possible. Call the recruiting department or attorney who extended you the offer, thank them for their time and the opportunity, and let them know that you have decided not to accept the offer. In some situations, you may also want to follow-up with a written decline letter or email - *e.g.*, if you orally decline to an attorney, you may want to let the recruiting department know via writing as well.

CONCLUSION

Whether you ultimately decide to accept or decline an offer, do it in a professional manner. Remember that while there may be thousands of lawyers, the legal community is actually quite small so being polite and gracious, even when turning down an offer, will be appreciated and noted by employers. Lastly, if you do accept employment, please let us know at the Office of Career Planning for important tracking purposes.