

How to Negotiate a Work Contract

Employment contracts are written agreements between an employee and an employer that define an individual's role at a company over a specific period of time. They usually outline the employee's responsibilities, reporting relationship, salary, benefits, and perks.

It's a wise idea to ask for some kind of an employment agreement—whether a formal contract or a list of stipulations in an offer letter—that clearly describes the terms of your hire and termination. Doing so means that you know what is expected of you, and what you can expect from your employer.

There are a number of ways to go about discussing the terms of your hire with a future employer, but ordinarily it's best to do so before you come on board. Employment contracts and agreements are rarely negotiated after an employee has been hired.

Negotiating a new employment contract is an important and challenging first step to embarking on your new career. There are a number of steps you can follow to make sure you get a satisfactory deal.

Six Steps to Successful Negotiation

➤ Step One

Research your market value before your first interview: Talk to friends and acquaintances in the business, contact headhunters, and consult career web sites that include information such as salary ranges and benefits packages.

➤ Step Two

Assess the company's approach, noting whether it invites negotiations or makes an offer first.

➤ Step Three

Listen to the way an offer is presented. A negotiation-minded manager will ask what figure you had in mind to get the process moving.

➤ Step Four

Divide the different aspects of the job offer: money, benefits, responsibilities, stock options, schedules.

➤ **Step Five**

If the offer appears set, be creative in negotiating for alternative perks such as time off, relocation expenses or a transportation allowance.

➤ **Step Six**

Repeat the offer out loud after you hear it, then don't say anything until the employer does. Often, your silence will be misinterpreted as hesitation and the employer will improve the offer.

➤ **Step Seven**

Speak your mind if you have any concerns. Now is the time to raise any worries that you may have, and to get all issues clarified.

Remember to clearly demonstrate your sincere excitement and interest in the job as well as in the compensation. Focus on being cooperative throughout the negotiations. This will keep things amiable and show that you are a team player.