

Preparing for Job Interviews

A HELPFUL GUIDE FOR ENTERING THE JOB MARKET



Preparation

Just as you would study for an important test, you should always take time to prepare for a job interview. From what you wear to what you say, the interview is your chance to highlight your skills and experience, and show your potential employer how you fit their company's needs.

Professional Image/ Brands

Email and Voicemail

Utilize a professional email address, e.g. jsmith@ku.edu (*not* beerguy@ku.edu). Emails to employers are an example of your written communication skills. Use proper grammar; do not use slang, abbreviations, text messages, etc. Always proofread before sending. If close to graduation, utilize a non KU email address instead of a KU email address.

Phone, Text, and Voicemail

Ensure your phone message is appropriate. If you are not in a setting where you can conduct a professional conversation (e.g., a noisy restaurant) and don't recognize the number, let the call go to voicemail. If caught off guard, or an employer calls at an inconvenient time, politely excuse yourself for a moment or explain that you are unable to talk at this time. Request a mutually agreeable time to call them or have them call back. While conducting a job search, be prepared to receive calls from employers. Ensure that your voicemail message is appropriate.

Social Networking Sites

When searching for a job, it is important to remember your online image. Some employers may search social networking sites or the internet for information on job candidates. Before you post pictures or statements on the web, keep in mind posting to the web is like getting a tattoo — it's permanent. Never post anything you wouldn't take into a job interview or show your grandmother. It is also a good idea to Google yourself to learn what information is out there and correct misinformation if possible. Understand the privacy settings on your social media accounts.

Applications

Many companies require you to fill out an application in addition to the resume and supporting materials you have already submitted. When you are filling out the application, you may be asked whether you have ever been terminated, arrested, or convicted. Read carefully and pay attention to the wording of the question. If an application asks and you do not

disclose, it can be considered falsification of records. Being honest will not necessarily jeopardize your candidacy. A possible way to answer a difficult question is, "Yes, details provided upon request."

Dining Etiquette

Meals are a common part of both the job search process and working with clients in the business world. Below is a list of tips to keep in mind when dining for business.

Basic Table Manners

- Be courteous to everyone, including restaurant staff.
- If possible, let the employer take the lead in ordering. Order along the same price range as the host or choose an entrée in the middle of the price range.
- It is best to order food that can be easily eaten with a knife and fork. Finger foods can be messy and are best left for informal dining.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages. If your host orders drinks for you, limit your intake to one (if of legal age). However, you are not obligated to drink it. Drinking too much is unprofessional and can damage your credibility.
- When dining at a formal table setting, a good rule of thumb is to begin with the outermost pieces of silverware and work towards the plate.
- When in doubt about the table setting, always remember solids on the left (bread plates) and liquids (drinking glasses) on the right. Think "BMW": Bread- Meal-Water.
- Wait to eat until everyone at the table has been served and your host has started the meal.



- Eat at a moderate speed. Don't make others wait for you to finish. Remember, your first priority is the business, not the food.
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap or resting on the table with wrists on the edge

of the table. Elbows on the table are acceptable only between courses, not while you are eating.

- Used silverware should never touch the table; rather, it should rest on your plate.
- If a piece of your silverware falls on the floor, pick it up if you can; let the server know you need a clean one.
- Don't make a big fuss if you spill or break something on the table. Wipe it up with your napkin if it is small or call the server.
- Place your slightly folded napkin on the right of your plate if you are leaving the table and plan to return. Place it on the left if you are leaving and not planning to return.
- You should not leave the table during the meal except in an emergency. If you must go to the bathroom or if you suddenly become sick, simply excuse yourself. Later you can apologize to your host by saying that you did not feel well.
- Say "no thank you" if you don't like or want something.

Professional Appearance

It's important to dress for the job you want. If in doubt, it's better to slightly overdress than to risk appearing too casual. If you want people to take you seriously, you need to dress and act the part.



No

- Trendy attire (unless going into the fashion industry)
- Tight clothing or gaping buttons
- Shorts, jeans, cargo pants, capri pants, tank tops, or crop tops.
- Flip flops, boots, sandals, or tennis shoes
- Excessive or flashy jewelry
- Five o'clock shadow. Trim or shave facial hairs.
- Formal attire
- Smoking before meeting employers



Do

- Overdress, when in doubt.
- Wash, tuck-in, starch, and iron shirts
- Polish your shoes
- Trim and manicure your nails. Nail polish should be clear or subtle.
- Apply make-up conservatively.
- Hair should be in a natural color and pulled back or styled conservatively.
- Lightly spray perfume or cologne (or completely forego it).
- Wear one earring per ear.
- Cover tattoos and remove body piercings (align to company standards).
- Wear shoes you can walk in that are appropriate for the interview site.
- Wear a belt that matches your shoes.
- Wear socks that are dark in color and high enough to cover the leg when seated.

Dress for Your Interview

You never get a second chance to make a first impression!

Business Professional Attire

For most interviews, wear a two-piece matching business suit. However, rules may vary depending on the industry.

- Two-piece matching suit in navy, dark gray or black (pinstriped pants or skirted suits are acceptable).
- Skirts must be at least knee-length.
- Ties should be conservative and not flashy.
- Socks should cover the calf and be a darker color to match your suit.
- Wear a plain white shirt underneath a light colored dress shirt.
- Closed-toe and closed-heel dress shoes with low heel height.



Business Casual Attire

Business casual attire should be crisp, clean and fit you properly. It is not synonymous with loungewear. Business casual is a classic look, not a trendy one. If you would wear it to the bar, a gym, a sporting event, a cocktail party, or a picnic, it is probably not appropriate.

- Dress pants/skirts should be worn with a dress shirt in a solid color or conservative print; avoid loud prints.
- Solid-colored V-neck or crew neck sweaters are appropriate.
- Skirts should be knee-length and should not be tight. Slits to facilitate walking are acceptable; slits to show off your legs are not.
- Blazers can be worn.
- Wear shoes that you can walk in, but avoid overly chunky platforms/heels.



Professional Etiquette

- You never know who you may meet before the on-site interview begins. Be nice to everyone, especially the receptionist or greeter; your interview begins as soon as you leave home.
- Turn your cell phone off (not on vibrate) and keep it out of sight.
- Offer a firm handshake — no one likes a dead fish or a bone-crusher.
- Smile, have good eye contact, and speak clearly.
- Have some general conversation topics ready at all times. You may want to have at least five current event topics available to talk about. Avoid negativity and controversial topics such as religion, politics, etc.
- Wait to sit until invited by your host.
- Do not chew gum during the interview.
- Sit up straight and don't fidget.
- Employer-sponsored social events can affect your reputation and chances for hiring/promotion with a company; keep this in mind when consuming alcohol, choosing attire for the event, and conducting yourself. This is not the time to party.
- Conversations, including those with peers, should always be of a professional nature. Overly intimate topics or gossip should not be shared at employer-sponsored events.

Company Research

Why research? Learning what you can about the company and being able to ask informed questions at the interview will help lift you above the competition and target your communication. Marketing yourself requires knowing how your skills, talents, values, and personality lend themselves to particular jobs. It is easy to:

- Start with the company website. Typically, the “About Us” section of the website will offer insight into the company history, culture, and values. Also, gather information on key products and services. Review recent press releases on their site.
- Check trade journals, LinkedIn, and public sources. Company information to look for includes: years in business, services or products, competitors within the industry, ranking within the industry, growth pattern, reputation, divisions and subsidiaries, location/length of time established there, size, sales, assets and earnings, projects, number of locations, and foreign operations.
- Utilize your network as they may have some insight into the company with which you are interviewing. Check with KU libraries and your career center for resources.

Interview Preparation/Research

- Verify the time and location of where the interview is located. Be sure you have directions for getting there. Account for rush hour traffic, construction, or other delays when making your travel plans.
- Plan to arrive ten minutes early.
- Know the name and title/position of your interviewer if possible. Being familiar with names ahead of time will make it easier to connect in person and will give a more personal touch to the thank you notes you write following the interview.
- If you know who you are interviewing with, learn more about them through their LinkedIn profile.
- It is okay to ask what type of interview will be conducted (i.e., panel, behavioral, case, etc.).



Check with the career
center for company research
resources.

The Interview

When you arrive at the interview, be prepared to make small talk with office staff and the interviewer(s) as well as shake hands with everyone you meet.

The Employer's Perspective

The interviewers will have objectives to achieve during the interview process. Although they already have basic information from your resume, they want to:

- Confirm your competence (knowledge, skills, and abilities) to do the job.
- Determine if you are a good fit for the company.
- Assess your communication skills—every sentence you speak during an interview provides an example of your verbal communication skills and ability to present information.
- Determine your level of motivation and interest in the position as well as the organization.
- Observe your interpersonal skills and how well you get along with other employees.
- Evaluate your problem-solving skills and initiative.

Answering Interview Questions

- Employers determine which skills or critical behaviors are

necessary for the position and then ask very deliberate questions to determine whether the candidate possesses those skills. Assess which skills the employer is seeking by talking with alumni, reading company literature, and listening closely during the company's information session.

- Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and answer the question completely.
- Responses such as, "That's a good question, let me think about that," or, "Did that answer your question?" could help make sure you're answering the question.
- Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering interview questions. Be prepared to elaborate on the experience listed on your resume.
- Keep your answers concise but complete. Your answer should take approximately 30 seconds to two minutes, depending on the depth of the question.
- Focus on your strengths and put a positive spin on answers to negative questions. Take responsibility and share what you learned.
- Enunciate, speak clearly, and avoid swearing and slang, or fillers (e.g., "um," "you know," "like").
- If you need to circle back to a question, do so at the end of the interview.

Phone Interviews

- Confirm the time zone for the company and your location. Lawrence and Kansas City are in the Central Time Zone (CST).
- Prepare your telephone area (paper, pen, calendar, and resume) and the location (i.e., hang a sign to warn roommates or other visitors). Minimize noise.
- Get in an interview mindset — it may help to dress as if you are going to an in-person interview.
- Consider standing up for a phone interview; it may help you project your voice.
- Give brief answers and follow with questions of your own.
- Make sure you are in a quiet, private place that's free of distractions. If you need a space, check with your career services office.

Web Cam/Pre-Recorded Video Interviews

If the interview is being conducted using video, treat it as you would an in-person interview. Dress and behave appropriately.

- Test the technology before the interview.



Wondering which qualities the employer may focus on in the interview? Reread the job description and desired qualifications for clues.

- Confirm the time zone for the company and your location. Lawrence and Kansas City are in the Central Time Zone (CST).
- Give brief answers and follow with questions of your own.
- Make sure you are in a quiet, private place that's free of distractions.
- Choose an appropriate background that will appear behind you (e.g. a blank wall).
- Dress appropriately—(business casual or better). Color should not blend into the wall behind you.
- Lighting is important. Use lamps if necessary.
- Computer camera should be at eye level. Use books to prop up the camera.
- Camera should be ~3 feet from your face (ensure microphone picks up your voice).
- Look at the camera, not the screen of yourself
- There may be a slight delay in video transmission—do not talk over the interviewer.
- Check with your career services office if you need space to conduct the interview.

In addition, during Pre-recorded Interviews:

- When preparing to interview, time your answers - the pre-recorded interview may cut off within a certain time frame (e.g. 2 or 3 minutes).
- If you get multiple chances for responses and have time between takes, write down the question so you can review it between takes.

Panel Interviews

Panel interviews are a common interviewing format that includes multiple interviewers asking questions. As a candidate, you will prepare for a panel interview the same way you would prepare for a one-on-one interview. Tips for managing the differences include:

- It is appropriate to ask for the names and job titles or areas of your panel members before the interview. Knowing this information can help you get a sense of how you might answer your interview questions.
- Be sure to look at all committee members when answering a question, not just the person who asked the question or the most senior panel member.
- Get a business card from each panel member and send each person a personalized thank you note following the interview.

Situational Interviews

Situational interviewing techniques focus on what candidates would do in a specific situation. This technique

involves questions that describe a hypothetical situation based on challenging, real-life, job-related occurrences and ask the candidates how they would handle the problem.

Example: You feel your team is making a wrong decision. How do you handle the situation? Most interviews will contain these types of questions.

Behavioral Interview

The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the best predictor of future behavior is past performance. Some points to remember when answering behavioral interview questions are listed below.

- Before the interview you need to think of specific examples where you have demonstrated the behaviors sought by the company. Recent examples are preferred.
- Demonstration of the desired behaviors may be proven in many ways. Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, and work experience. In addition, you may use personal examples such as competing in a marathon or running for student body president. Avoid being overly personal (e.g. roommate arguments).
- Your response needs to be specific and detailed. Tell the interviewer about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly describe the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome. The interviewer may probe further for more depth or detail such as, "What were you thinking at that point?" or, "Lead me through your decision process."
- The question will require you to frame your answer in one of the following ways:

STAR: Situation (when and where did the situation occur; who was involved?), Task (what was the challenge/task?), Action (what action did you take?), Result (what was the result of your actions?)

A + 1: Answer plus an example

Case Interviews

Case interviews are a specialized style of interviewing that is common for consulting and finance interviews; however, they can be found in any field. Case interviews allow an employer to assess a candidate's ability to use logic, analyze a situation, and sort through a large amount of information as well as their ability to present recommendations to a group.

The "right" answer is not as important as the process you use when answering the question. Case questions can take several forms such as market-sizing questions, business strategy questions, or business operations questions.

Answering case interview questions can seem very

overwhelming. However, students who know they will be getting a case interview question or who have an interview in the areas of consulting or finance are strongly encouraged to contact their career services center for information on the do's and don'ts of answering case interview questions. Company websites may also provide case interview preparation resources.

Technical Interviews

This type of interview is usually conducted by a professional in your field. You may be asked about knowledge specific to your industry. Be prepared to define terms common to your discipline or solve basic problems common in your academic area. You may want to review some of the vocabulary and problems found in basic-level courses in your field. You may be given a brief assignment to demonstrate a skill (e.g. writing a press release, coding, design)

Interview Presentations

An employer may ask you to make a presentation as part of your interview. In most cases, you'll receive instructions ahead of time detailing the topic and length. Make sure you understand what is expected regarding the topic, format, and length. Determine whether audio-visual elements are required or appropriate. (Hint: if you use AV, be sure it is done well.)

Research the topic, create an outline, write, and edit. Practice in front of others, timing your presentation and incorporating your visuals. Memorize as much as possible, but make sure you have a print copy or notes to glance at in case nerves get the best of you or the AV equipment doesn't work. Prior to the interview, confirm the time and location as well as the technology available for your presentation. Arrive early enough to set up your technology and organize your thoughts.

During the presentation, be sure to introduce yourself and make eye contact with your audience, being careful not to focus on just one or two people. Smile, relax, and speak clearly at an easy-to-follow pace. At the end, ask if there are questions and be prepared to answer! Finish by repeating your name and thanking your audience for their time.

Tell Me About Yourself Questions

"Tell me about yourself" is a common opening question in job interviews, and preparation is key. This question provides an opportunity to communicate a succinct overview of what you would bring to the company as well as why you are a good fit and qualified for the position. Avoid sharing your life story or purely personal information.

To prepare, research the company and review the required / preferred qualifications for the position to gain an understanding of the company's desired attributes. Then reflect on your education, experience, skills, and

accomplishments. Select a few to highlight which are relevant to the specific job you are applying for and that differentiate you from your peers. Draft some potential phrases which include both an experience or skill plus a brief phrase or two illustrating where you gained that experience or applied the skill. You can expand upon these examples and provide details during other interview questions.

For example:

"I will complete my bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering this spring and both of my senior elective classes, _____ and _____, align very closely with the skills needed in this position. I have gained hands-on manufacturing experience as well as an introduction to Six Sigma through my internship at XYZ Company. In addition, I have become known for my strong written communication skills; my internship supervisor and two of my professors have complimented me on the excellence of my technical reports. Two summers ago, I had the chance to hone my teamwork and problem-solving skills through an Engineers without Borders project, when I collaborated with six other engineers to design and construct a solar shower for a small village in Bolivia.

As I prepare for a full-time position after graduation, I hope to apply these qualities and my passion for engineering in a company like yours which values

General Interview Questions

? Personal Information

What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

How do you handle criticism?

How do you think a supervisor, friend, or professor would describe you?

Why should I hire you?

How do you like to be managed?

What two or three things are most important to you in a job?

? Education

Why did you choose your major?

What class did you like best and least? Why?

How has your college experience prepared you for a career with our organization?

What are your plans for continued study?

Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?

? Experience

What did you like best and least about your last job?

What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?

What experience do you bring to this job?

What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?

Describe your most rewarding college experience.

? Company or Organization Questions

Why do you want to work for this company?

What position in our company interests you the most?

What do you know about our company?

? Motivation

What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

Why did you choose this career?

How would you describe the ideal job for you?

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

How do you determine and evaluate success?

What salary are you looking for? (Try to avoid answering this until you reach the final interview stage.)

Behavioral Interview Questions

? Communication Skills

Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

Tell me about a time when you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.

Describe the most significant or creative presentation you have given.

Give an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even though that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

Sometimes employees must communicate sensitive or unpleasant information to customers or other team members. Describe a time, in a work setting, when you had to communicate unfavorable information to someone.

? Adaptability/Stress and Time Management

By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.

*Describe a time when you had to function in a new environment that was different from one you had functioned in previously.
How did you adapt?*

Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.

Tell me about a time when you had to work with competing priorities or an excessive workload.

*Give me an example of a time when your schedule was interrupted.
How did you react to this?*

Tell me about a situation when you had to learn something new in a short time. How did you proceed?

*Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline.
How did you handle the subsequent situation?*

? Leadership/Personal Effectiveness

Give an example of an important goal you set and tell about your success in reaching it.

Tell about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Describe a time when you decided on your own that something needed

to be changed, and you took on the task to get it done.

Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. How did you deal with the failure? What did you learn from the experience? What would you have done differently?

Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.

Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.

What are three effective leadership qualities you think are important. How have you demonstrated these qualities in your past/current position?

How have you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do?

Tell me about a time when you constructively dealt with disappointment and turned it into a learning experience. What was the situation? What factors led to the disappointing outcome? What did you learn from this situation? What would you do differently if you had it to do all over again?

Give a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.

? Teamwork

Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult co-worker or customer.

Describe a situation in which you were part of a team and not everyone was doing their share. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?

Tell me about a team project in which you are particularly proud of your contribution.

? Decision Making and Problem Solving

Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to resolve a difficult situation.

Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.

Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

*Give me an example of a time when you could not make a decision because you did not have enough information?
How did you handle the situation? What was the result?*

Describe a situation in which you had to make a decision involving an element of risk. What was the outcome? How comfortable were you in making the decision?

Describe a creative solution you have developed. How did you do it?

Questions to ask Employers

You should always prepare a few questions for employers — it shows interest in the company. These questions can be written down and taken to the interview with you. Your questions should not be the type that could have been answered by doing very basic research. Be aware that some interviews have very strict time limits (such as 30 minutes), so don't ask an excessive number of questions.

? Questions About the Company

What expansion is planned for this department/facility?

What are your growth projections for next year?

What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?

Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within?

What do you consider to be your organization's three most important assets?

Tell me about your company's culture.

What is unique about the way this company operates?

? Questions About the Position

Please expand on the duties of the job for me.

What is a typical day like?

What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?

What are the potential career paths within the company?

Has there been much turnover in this job?

Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?

What is the person doing now that previously held the position?

What qualities and skills are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?

How much team/project work is involved in this position?

Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?

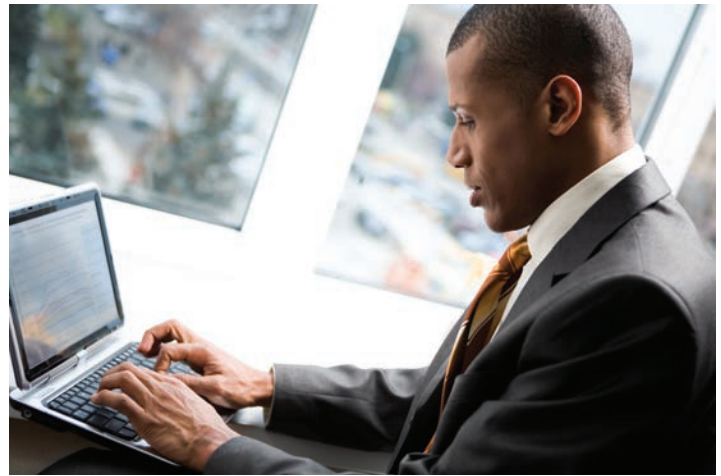
Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?

How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?

What happens during the training program?

Tell me about the workspace.

What are the goals/ priorities for this position in the first six months?



You should always have a few questions for employers — it shows interest in the company.

? Personal Questions

What do you like most and least about working for the organization?

Can you tell me about your own experience with the organization?

What does it take to advance in this field?

? Wrap-Up Questions

What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?

What is your timeline for extending an offer?

Questions on Salary

Let the company initiate salary discussions. Some experts suggest deferring salary discussions if they come up early in the interview process, but always be prepared by knowing the appropriate salary range.

When asked for salary requirements, suggest to the recruiter that you would like to discuss this topic after exploring the nature of the position and your qualifications. If pressed, try to get the recruiter to state a range first:

"Based on my research, I expect to earn a salary that is appropriate for my skills and qualifications — what is the range that the company has in mind?"

See your career services center for more information on salary negotiations.

Get a business card or contact information from every person at the interview.

After the Interview

Post Interview Etiquette

Thank You Note

Always send a thank you note within 24 hours after an interview. Thank you notes can be typed, handwritten, or emailed. However, keep in mind your goal is to help employers have one more positive contact with you before they make a hiring decision, so in the essence of time, emailing may be the most efficient. Some employers prefer an emailed version as it can be forwarded to others on the hiring committee. If you choose to hand-write a note, you may want to email a short thank you and follow it up with a longer, handwritten note. Your thank you note can help to emphasize your fit for the job or provide additional information such as pointing an employer to an online portfolio of your work or a website containing further job-relevant information. Who you address the thank you note to depends on the interview situation. If you interviewed with several people, have contact information for each person, and are able to remark on something you discussed with each person, you may want to send a separate, personalized note to each interviewer. If, on the other hand, you interviewed with several people but find that your thank you note would be the same for each, it is OK to address the committee as a whole in one thank you note sent to your main contact.

Sample Thank You Email

Thank You	Thank You
Dear Ms.White, _____	Use the correct title: Mr. or Ms. (not Mrs. or Miss)
I wanted to thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the software developer position. After meeting you and learning more about Data Systems, I am even more impressed with the advanced technologies employed by your company.	<i>First Paragraph</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Express your sincere appreciation for the interviewKeep the letter warm and friendly, but professional
My enthusiasm for the position has grown stronger as a result of the interview. As I discussed with you, my past two summer positions were related to the development and design of software programs for corporate accounting applications. With my skills and interest in software design, I believe I could make a significant contribution to your company, and I would appreciate the opportunity to do so.	<i>Body</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reemphasize your strongest qualificationsDraw attention to the match between your experience and the requirements for the position
I want to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and the Data Systems team. This is exactly the kind of opportunity I am seeking after my graduation. If I can provide any further information, please let me know.	<i>Last Paragraph</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reiterate your interest in the positionYou may offer to provide information not previously givenExpress your appreciation
Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.	
Sincerely, _____	<i>Signature</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sign with Sincerely or Respectfully
Jay Hawk jhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Leave one blank lineType your first and last name

Employer Follow-Up

If an employer has not gotten back to you within the time frame discussed, it is appropriate to contact the employer to follow-up on your status. If a time frame was not mentioned, wait two weeks after the interview to follow-up. Keep in mind that employers may be very busy meeting other work responsibilities — it is important to limit the frequency of follow-up contacts to avoid annoying the employer. If you are not sure whether it is appropriate to call, ask your career center.

Job Offers

Receiving an Offer

An offer for employment is typically delivered over the phone or email by your primary point of contact through the recruiting process. Be sure to thank them for the offer and clarify when you need to provide a decision. Do not instantly accept the offer because there may be multiple factors to consider, but be sure to acknowledge receipt of an email.

Example:

"Thank you for the offer. I am excited about this position and the opportunity to work for your company. Of course, this is a very important decision for me and I will need some time to think it over. May I get back to you with my decision?"

In addition to a verbal offer, you should request and receive a written document outlining the details of the employment offer as well as associated benefits. Bonus or relocation details and associated stipulations may also be included. Be sure any changes or exceptions are noted in the written document before signing.

Do not accept an offer and continue the job search.

If you would like to continue interviewing with other companies, ask for a deadline extension. Talk to someone in career services for guidance.

Evaluating the Offer

There are many issues to consider when assessing a job offer. It's not unusual for new questions to emerge as you evaluate an opportunity. Now is the time to ask the potential employer about these issues — and to do some checking on your own. Before you make a decision you might regret, make the effort to get clarification. You can get in touch with the recruiting contact, an alumnus that works for the organization, career services staff, or a current employee to provide you with the information that you need to make the best decision for you.

Ask About Restrictive Covenants Before Signing Job & Internship Offers

Organizations hiring new employees for internships and jobs might ask new hires to sign restrictive covenant agreements, such as non-compete and nondisclosure agreements — often on the first day of employment. Students should consider asking about any restrictive

covenants before accepting a job offer and have such agreements reviewed by KU Legal Services for Students. For example, during the offer discussion process, students could ask, "Many companies have non-compete and confidentiality types of agreements that employees sign when they actually start work — is it possible to get a copy of those now?" Please note that students must be currently enrolled at the KU Lawrence campus to be eligible for KU Legal Services.

Factors to Consider in an Offer

A candidate rarely gets everything he or she wants in a job offer. Consider which factors are most important to you and which ones you would be willing to give up in order to get what you want most. Think about what you would like to have in a job several years in the future.

- Salary and benefits
- Job/industry stability (including turnover and layoffs).
- Physical work environment
- Geographic location/possibility of relocation
- Personally rewarding work, impact on society
- Opportunities to travel
- Level of responsibility/autonomy
- Size of the organization
- Non-profit vs. profit/public vs. private
- Nature of supervision
- Fit with co-workers
- Telecommuting/flex-time
- Opportunity for advancement
- Work hours
- Ability to use skills and be challenged
- Training and development

Coping with Rejection

If you get the dreaded rejection letter, it's okay to feel disappointed. Give yourself a brief time period to grieve and then move on. Spend some time analyzing the process and what you could do differently in the future. Review your resume and reflect on the interview. Consider your presentation, including preparation, interview attire, body language, nervous habits, and answers to the questions.

Consider reapplying. In some industries it is common to apply several times before your application is successful. A one-time rejection is not always a permanent rejection. Ask "What is your reapplication time frame or protocol?"



Calculate Your Yearly Expenses

It is important to have a basic understanding of how much money you will need. If you plan to move to another geographic area, be sure you factor in the difference in cost of living. Here's a list of items to help you get a realistic idea of your expenses.

EXPENSE	COST PER YEAR
Rent or mortgage	\$ _____
Health insurance	_____
Vision insurance	_____
Dental insurance	_____
Life insurance	_____
Disability insurance	_____
Medical expenses	_____
Medications	_____
Car payments	_____
Car insurance	_____
Student loan payments	_____
Miscellaneous loan payments	_____
Homeowners' association dues	_____
Electricity	_____
Utilities (gas, propane, etc.)	_____
Water	_____
Homeowner's/renter's insurance	_____
Property tax	_____
Phone	_____
Internet	_____
Cable/satellite	_____
Gas (for your vehicle)	_____
Public transportation	_____
Groceries	_____
Entertainment	_____
Clothes	_____
Miscellaneous expenses	_____
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ _____

Understanding Benefits and Total Compensation

Wait until you have received a job offer before discussing or asking questions about salary and benefits. Total compensation includes your base salary plus the value of the benefits package and is a factor that must be carefully weighed. Benefits can increase your compensation by up to one-third of your salary. These factors should be carefully considered:

- Insurance premiums and coverage (medical, prescription, dental, vision, life, disability, flexible spending)
 - What is the co-pay?
- Paid time off (PTO): vacation, sick/disability leave, family leave (maternity, paternity, or family leave)
 - How are these allocated? When can you begin to use them? Do you accrue this immediately or is there a waiting period? Does your PTO roll over from year to year? When does your PTO allocation increase?
- Retirement plans
 - Does the company match contributions? Are you eligible for this immediately? Is a contribution mandatory?
 - Understanding the vesting time frame.
- Stock options and profit-sharing
- Bonuses: signing, holiday, productivity
 - Remember, if you lose your job for any reason, you may be required to pay it back. How are bonuses allocated (according to seniority, sales, level of position, etc.)?
- Relocation expenses
 - Are they covered?
 - Is it a flat fee or a reimbursement? If you lose your job for any reason, will you be required to pay it back?
- Tuition reimbursement
 - Will they reimburse for advanced degrees or licensures? Do they have a student loan payback plan?
- Flex-time or telecommuting
 - Is there flexibility to work from home for this position? Do you need to be employed for a specific amount of time to be eligible? Can you work four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days? Will weekend or evening work be available/required?
- Professional memberships/professional development opportunities
- Expense accounts
- On-site child care
- Company car, mileage allowance, parking
- Technical allowances (cell phone, personal computer)

Negotiating the Offer

WARNING: You are affecting your relationship with your future employer.

Are there issues you want to negotiate that would make the offer more attractive? Perhaps there are issues about the offer that are flexible, such as start date or location. If you have concerns about a particular aspect of the offer, ask whether it can be negotiated. *“Is there flexibility in terms of the compensation?”* Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and may not have flexibility to negotiate. Check with your career center for salary surveys for new graduates.

Salary Negotiation Tips

- The best time to negotiate is after an offer is made. Avoid salary discussions during an interview before a firm offer is made.
- Don’t negotiate just for the sake of it. A company will offer what is perceived by them to be a fair compensation package based on your experience, educational background, and skills. If you feel it is inconsistent with market data, share your researched facts with them.
- Always maintain professionalism in the negotiation process. Your professionalism will confirm the skills that you will offer the organization.
- Don’t negotiate **Too** hard. Aggressive negotiation tactics may lead to a rescinded offer.
- During the negotiation process, reiterate your excitement about the offer. Be gracious before elaborating on the concerns that you would like addressed.
- Research typical salary ranges for the nature of the work and the geographical area before asking for more money. Current economic factors such as hiring demand and availability of candidates will influence your worth to an employer.
- Do not bring your personal financial obligations into a salary discussion. The organization is not concerned about your expenses or debts and will not consider these issues in determining a fair salary for you.
- Be able to articulate your strengths so there is no question what value you can offer to an organization. Your value to the company can come from experience, specialized knowledge, or certifications / license relevant to the job.

- A peer’s higher offer is not sufficient reason to negotiate your offer. Salaries differ from company to company and from industry to industry; plus, a certain skill set may be more in demand at the current time.
- Understand that your negotiation requests may be denied. Even if an employer wanted to concede to your requests, the ability to do so might not exist. Decide which of your requests are “deal breakers” and which are only on your “wish list”.
- If your negotiation requests are accepted, you are expected to accept the job with no further negotiation.

Handling Multiple Offers

Weigh all of the factors. Create a pros and cons list outlining the comparative aspects of each opportunity. Analyze the list according to what is most important to you. You might be tempted to accept the higher paying offer, but many other factors will impact your career satisfaction. If the opportunities seem genuinely equal, look inside yourself, keeping in mind what is really important to you.

Turning Down an Offer

Be tactful and timely when declining an offer for employment. It is very important not to “burn bridges behind you.” Be sure to indicate any aspects about the recruiting process or organization that you enjoyed or appreciated. Decline the offer verbally and in writing. For example:

Thank you for offering me the position of Business Assistant with XYZ Company. Your organization’s reputation for exemplary customer service was reflected in the courtesy and professionalism provided to me throughout the interview process.

However, after careful consideration, I have decided to accept another position that aligns more closely with my skills and interests at this point in my career.

Thank you again for the opportunity to interview and learn more about your organization. I enjoyed meeting you and the other members of the sales team.

Accepting the Offer

Get the final offer in writing. Sign a copy for the employer and keep a copy for yourself. Thank your references and others who have assisted in your job search. Report your offer to your career center.

Congratulations! You’re hired!





The “Preparing for Job Interviews” guide is part of a series. Get a copy of the “Resumes, References, and Cover Letters” and “Strategies for a Successful Job Search” guides at your career services office.

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