



# Skills for Employment: Accepting and Starting the Job

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## Introduction

Searching for a job is often a long process. Very few people get a job offer for each and every job they apply for. You must be prepared for some rejections and even, at times, for a long wait. It is very important through the whole process that you do not get discouraged and quit. Many factors in the job search are beyond your control. There may be many qualified applicants, an interviewer that has had a bad day or the job may not be right for you. Getting discouraged will not help you and probably will hurt in the long run. Employers recognize when someone is bitter, resentful or discouraged. That is not the kind of employee most companies are looking to hire.

## When You Get a Job Offer

Once you get a job offer, what next? Everything you have been doing up to this point has been geared towards getting the job. Now that you have an offer, you have to decide if you want the job. Remember, you do not have to accept every job offer. A job is an important part of our lives. It requires many of our waking hours. Don't accept a job immediately, unless you are absolutely sure you want the job. Ask for some time to think the matter over. One convenient way to do this is to say "I would like to think about the offer before accepting."

The time to start evaluating a potential job is after an interview. During the interview, find out as much information as possible about the job, the company, the wage rate and the benefits. Rarely will an employer make a decision to hire you on the spot. So, you generally have some time to think about the position before hearing from the employer. Take this time to really examine the job. Some questions to consider are:

### Is this the kind of work I want to do?

- \* Do you feel comfortable with the work load?
- \* Does the work fit your skills and abilities?

- \* Will there be too much overtime? Too little?
- \* Will traveling to and from work be a problem?
- \* Are the hours good for you?

### Is this the kind of company I want as my employer?

- \* Does the company have a good reputation in the community, state and nation?
- \* Have you heard good things about the company from friends and relatives?
- \* Does the company have a future? Is it stable?
- \* Does the company promote from within?
- \* Does the company have good relations with it's employees?

### Is the wage rate enough for you to live on?

- \* Will there be overtime?
- \* What can you expect to make in a typical week?
- \* Is there room for advancement?

### What benefits does the company offer?

- \* Is there health insurance? What does it cover?
- \* Does the company offer life, accident and disability insurance?
- \* Does the company pay for training and education?
- \* What part of the benefits is the employee expected to pay?
- \* Do company benefits cover my family as well as myself?

Take your notes from the job interview and try to answer these and any other questions you might have concerning the job. In the privacy of your own home, you will be able to make an informed decision that will be right for you. If there are some important unanswered questions, ask them when the employer contacts you to offer the job or to schedule a second interview. Sometimes employers do not like to talk about specifics such as wage or benefits until they are serious about the candidate. If you don't know this information, be ready to ask about it when the employer contacts you again.

When you have made up your mind and the employer offers you the job, what do you say?

**If you do not want to accept the job:** Thank the employer but say that you have decided to decline the offer. Although you do not owe the employer any explanation, it is generally better to give some general explanation. You never can tell if you might be looking for a job at that company in the future, so it's best to maintain good relations. For example:

*Thank you Mr. Jones for the offer, but I have decided not to accept the position. After thinking it over, I feel that I wouldn't like a job with a swing shift. I appreciate the company's interest in me. Please consider me if there are any daytime positions available in the future.*

or

*I appreciate the offer, Mrs. Caper, but I have decided to accept a job at another company. I felt very good about Stoufers, Inc., but the other position is the kind of work I am most interested in. I enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for your time and interest.*

**If you decide to accept the position:** Congratulations! However, there still might be some employment factors to consider. If you are going to negotiate anything, now is the time to do it. In many cases you won't have much room to negotiate the wage, but if it is important to you, go ahead. Be sure before hand that you know what wage you would settle for. Be realistic. If you want a wage that is considerably higher than what the employer is offering, this probably isn't the job for you. Be ready to explain why you think you deserve more money; don't just ask.

Other considerations include: starting date, shift hours, your supervisor, parking provisions and pre-employment orientation or health examination. Of course, if you have any other questions or concerns raise them at this time.

### **Employer Expectations**

Once you have accepted a job, you begin a new period in your life. Jobs are very demanding. Your schedule will revolve around work, when you get up, when you get home and a whole host of other activities. Your first few months on the job will be very important. Many employers set aside a trial or probation period to review your work. It is very important to get off to a good start. Here are some things that an employer will expect of you:

**Be on time.** Be on time when you arrive, during lunch, during breaks and when you leave.

Employers notice when you are not following the work times.

### **Dress appropriately for the job.**

Employers expect their employees to dress a certain way. Each job will be different. If you don't know what is appropriate dress, ask your supervisor.

**If you can't come to work, call your boss or supervisor.** There will be times because of illness or emergency that you cannot come to work. Your boss or supervisor needs to know if you won't be there so he/she can make work adjustments during your absence. Most employers will accept absences because of illness or emergency, but you shouldn't abuse the privilege.

**Be a team player.** Being a team player means that you are willing to jump in and work with your fellow employees. Work at getting along with other employees; they can be very helpful. They also play an important part in your success and happiness at your new job. Being a team player also means accepting and following through on tasks that you don't always want to do. Most jobs involve doing something we don't particularly enjoy.

**Listen and follow instructions.** You will be learning many new things at your job. Be a good listener when new tasks are explained to you. Taking notes may be helpful. An employer expects you to learn your job as quickly as possible.

**Learn to accept criticism.** Nobody gets very far in a job if they aren't willing to accept criticism. That's how we learn things. Accept that you won't be able to do everything right the first time. Most employers understand and will work with you to help you become a better worker.

**When you are at work, work!** Business hours are for business. Do not take other workers' time by talking too much or making personal phone calls. These take time away from work. Not working is one of the quickest ways to lose a job.

**Work at becoming better at your job.** An employer likes to see an employee working to become better. Improvement always looks good on a work record. Set goals as you work so that you can monitor your own progress.

### **Responsibilities of an Employee**

When you accept a job, you also accept a set of responsibilities. You are being paid for your work, so an employer expects you to follow the company rules. More importantly, an employer expects that you will become part of the company team. You should try to fit in and feel loyalty

**Don't wander from the subject at hand.** Try to keep the interview focused on your talents and abilities, or on the job and company. Although the conversation may stray at times, the main point of an interview should be on you and the job. When the interviewer strays, just be polite but stay with the subject of you seeking employment.

**Don't hang around after the interview is over.** Look for a cue from the employer that the interview is over. Don't linger or prolong it. Simply thank the employer and leave. Trying to make the interview last and last will not help your chances of getting a job.

### Some Common Interview Questions

Below is a list of common interview questions. Some are straight forward, while others can be tricky or make it difficult to understand what the employer is driving at.

- \* Tell me about yourself.
- \* Have you ever done this kind of work before?
- \* Why do you want to work here?
- \* What are your strengths?
- \* What are your weaknesses?
- \* What do you expect as a starting salary?
- \* How long did it take to get here today?
- \* What is your educational level?

Below is a list of other interview questions that are often asked. Try to practice how you would respond to each of these questions.

- \* Why do you think you would be good at this job?
- \* How do you feel about working under pressure?
- \* What job would you like to have five years from now?
- \* What type of positions are you interested in?
- \* How do you feel about traveling for the company?

### The Follow-Up to an Interview

After an interview, we are often excited and anxious. Did I get the job? Did I make a good impression? Unfortunately, we have to wait. There is little we can do after an interview, since the decision is in the hands of an employer. However, one thing we can do is to send a follow-up letter. The follow-up letter is simply a letter sent to the interviewer thanking him or her for the opportunity given in the interview. The letter should be short and to the point. You may, however, make one or two points in your favor to remind the interviewer of who you are and of your interest in the position. A sample follow-up letter can be found on the last page of this publication.

### Partial List of Questions You are Not Required to Answer

The following is a partial list of questions that are and are not allowed to be asked during a job interview, on a job application or as a condition for hiring, firing or promoting an employee.

- \* **Age.** It is lawful to require proof of age only from a minor in the form of a work permit or certificate.
- \* **Religion.** It is unlawful to inquire about an applicant's religious preference.
- \* **Sex.** Any inquiry regarding sex is unlawful, except where mandatory occupational requirements exist.
- \* **Marital status.** Questions about marital status, number of children and pregnancy are unlawful.
- \* **Race.** Questions relating directly or indirectly to an applicant's race or color are unlawful. Height and weight inquiries are unlawful unless that information is relevant to the job being sought.
- \* **Ethnic background.** It is unlawful to inquire about an applicant's national origin or that of his or her parents or spouse.
- \* **Arrest record.** Inquiries related to arrests and convictions that are not specifically related to job performance are unlawful.
- \* **Credit rating.** All questions about charge accounts or credit ratings are unlawful.
- \* **Ancestry.** Inquiries about one's name, for the purpose of determining an applicant's ancestry, lineage, or national origin, are unlawful.

These conditions were established in the Equal Opportunity Act of 1974. The Act applies to the following:

- "State and Local Governments
- All public and private educational institutions
- Private employers of 15 or more persons
- Labor unions with 15 or more members
- Public and private employment agencies
- Joint labor/management committees for apprenticeship and training" (Madry, 1987, p.33).

#### Adapted from:

Career Assistance for Farmers Modules, by Thomas W. Ilvento, Anthony Hollinsworth, and Mark A. White, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky.

#### Additional Reference:

Madry, B.R. (1987). The Job Seekers Guide Bronx, N.Y.: Milady Publishing Company.

#### Minor Revision of:

Skills for Farmers: The Job Interview by Sarah E. Drummond, Jennifer Dodrill, and Beverly Bailey, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

**Summary**

Finding a job can be a long process. Once you find a job, however, the need for persistence and enthusiasm does not end. After finding a job, you will need to continue to concentrate your efforts on becoming a hard working valuable employee. Accepting a job brings a new set of responsibilities, not only to yourself but also to your employer.

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Skills for Farmers: Accepting and Starting the Job by Sarah E. Drummond, Jennifer Dodrill, and Beverly Bailey, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.