



# How to Turn Down a Job Offer

Knowing how to say no thank you and exit with grace.

You never anticipated that you'd be declining a job offer. In fact, you probably thought getting an interview was going to be hard enough. Yet, here you are! Maybe you have multiple internship offers, or maybe your skill set is in high demand. Whatever the reason, if you need to turn down a job offer, follow these "dos" and "don'ts."

## **Do: Show appreciation**

Make sure to thank your interviewers for their time, effort, and interest, even if you do not accept the role. This includes communicating quickly and honestly your refusal of the offer, as well as what you liked about the company.

## **Don't: Accept and then turn down an offer**

Avoid accepting an offer as a "back up," or if you are not sure that you will be able to start the role. Don't lead the company on; recruiters prefer to know outright that you will not be accepting the offer. This is particularly important if you found the role through a personal contact or a school career services posting. Otherwise, it could potentially damage the relationship between your contact and the hiring organization. If you are uncertain or need more time to decide between two offers, it's best to be honest with the organization rather than accept and then decline.

## **Do: Be prompt, direct, and brief**

Communicate your refusal as soon as you have your decision; don't procrastinate. Be direct, concise, and honest—but not critical—in your reasons for declining. If the company did not meet your start date expectations, make them aware of this factor. The organization might be willing to negotiate, or use the feedback for future hires. Communicate your decision person-to-person via telephone, if possible. Send a follow-up email or better, a formal letter, to confirm in writing. Never decline via text message or social media.

## **Don't: Burn bridges**

The world is smaller than you think. You never know when you may run into the hiring manager

down the line, or if someday you may need employment at the company you declined. Plus, it's possible that someone who interviewed you may want to hire you at a later date for another role and/or at another firm. Treat everyone with respect and bear in mind that all contacts may lead to future employment.

## **Do: Be careful about accepting the first offer that you get**

As a new graduate, you may be tempted to accept the first offer you receive. While you want to be open to the opportunity for growth that an entry-level position offers, make sure to carefully consider and weigh the various factors. Does it provide relevant skills? Will the work environment be conducive to a two-year+ commitment? Are transportation and associated expenses feasible? Speak to family, friends, and faculty advisors to ensure that you are making the right decision.

## **Do: Know your worth**

Before you turn down the position, be comfortable knowing that you'll unlikely be able to interview again for the same role. Be certain that what you decline is not the best fit for your skills and that you will be able to find something better. This means having a clear understanding of your strengths and weaknesses and what you offer as a candidate.

## **Do: Be sure that you mean it**

Before you decline a job offer, be absolutely certain that you really *want* to turn down the position. Accept that once you do so your decision is final. It's unlikely that you'll be able to change your mind at a later date. So be fully prepared to live with your choice.



## **i** n a nutshell:

While turning down a job can be awkward and uncomfortable:

- **Be sincere, honest, and respectful when declining**
- **Convey your reasons for turning down the job offer but avoid being negative**
- **Show appreciation for the time and opportunity**
- **Communicate via telephone, person-to-person; follow up in writing with each interviewer**
- **Part ways amicably; don't badmouth anyone**
- **Be certain that you've made the best decision for you**

Be gracious. No one likes to be turned down. However, by exercising respect and diplomacy, you can exit professionally with your reputation and integrity intact.