

## EVALUATING AN OFFER: *Accept or Decline?*

[www.citadel.edu/career\\_services/Interviewing.htm](http://www.citadel.edu/career_services/Interviewing.htm)

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**The Citadel**  
THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
**CAREER CENTER**



Review the following information and tips regarding how to evaluate an offer from an employer. There are a number of factors to consider as you determine whether to accept or decline a job offer. These factors will stem from what you value in your personal life, as well as what you seek in your work. Accepting or declining an offer should not be taken lightly. Regardless of your final decision, it is considered appropriate business etiquette for you to promptly contact the employer. Your reputation and that of future Citadel students are at stake!

1. Once you are in a position to evaluate offers regarding your first job or graduate school admission, **consider all factors that will weigh into your decision-making. Develop a Pros and Cons list** for the various options before you. Determine which specific aspects of the position related to the duties, work environment, and benefits are a plus for you and which ones are negatives. Also consider what will affect your life outside of work. What does the surrounding community have to offer in terms of housing; recreational activities; stores to meet your needs for food, clothing and other essentials; etc.?
  - a. Review the Chamber of Commerce website for the area(s) in which you would be living and look for “new resident” or similarly named information to obtain a variety of resources on finding a place to live, renting vs. owning, information on utilities (water, sewer, electric, phone, cable, etc.), banks, insurance (renters/home owners, life, medical), recreation, medical care, school districts, etc. Refer to the “Geographic Targeting” section of our Job Search website via [www.citadel.edu/career\\_services/JobSearch.htm#geo](http://www.citadel.edu/career_services/JobSearch.htm#geo) for Chamber information.
  - b. Considering Charleston as your new home? Review the New Resident Information and Cost of Living Calculator via [www.charlestonchamber.net/content.asp?catID=876](http://www.charlestonchamber.net/content.asp?catID=876).

Keep in mind that only you can make these decisions; others may advise, but you will be the one who decides to pursue a particular position, live in a particular city, etc. And you will need to be comfortable with those decisions.

2. **When an employer offers a position to you** with the company, you will generally be given a few days to a week before you are expected to make your decision known to them. If you are given less time than that or need another day to decide, simply ask if you may have more time or if you are to decide on a Friday, ask for the weekend. The answer may be no, but you will likely feel more at ease if you ask.

Also be prepared that some employers may make the offer at the end of the day following your second/third/fourth interview while you are still on-site. If you need time to decide, ask for it. Typically, an employer will give you a deadline by which your decision must be made. If one is not given, politely request a week or the weekend to consider.

If there is a great deal of uncertainty in your decision-making, this may be a sign that you will be happiest if you decline the offer. Do not accept an offer simply because it is the only one on the table and you feel compelled to take it. If you do, chances are you will be looking for a job again soon.

3. Be sure you **understand the details of the offer**, to include: initial assignment, initial salary, starting date, location, opportunity for advancement, company environment, benefits, and whether the company assists with relocation expenses. Have an attorney look over your contract before signing it if you have any concerns.
  - a. **Benefits.** Be sure you understand your complete benefits’ package and how it ties into your overall salary. For background information on benefits, review sites including: [www.about.com](http://www.about.com), [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com), [www.managementhelp.org/pay\\_ben/benefits/benefits.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/pay_ben/benefits/benefits.htm), [www.jobs.sc.gov/OHR/benefits.pdf](http://www.jobs.sc.gov/OHR/benefits.pdf) (SC State Benefits), and [www.dol.gov/dol/topic/health-plans/index.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/health-plans/index.htm) (US Department of Labor).

4. **If you determine you want the position, call** to accept and then send an **Acceptance Letter** (format at [www.citadel.edu/career\\_services/Interview%20Info/OfferLetterFormat\\_accpt.pdf](http://www.citadel.edu/career_services/Interview%20Info/OfferLetterFormat_accpt.pdf)). The acceptance of an offer is not to be taken lightly. Having accepted an offer, honor all aspects of that commitment, as is expected of general business ethics and The Citadel Honor Code.

If your employer contact is out of the office, be sure to leave a voicemail message. This will let the person know that you have attempted to make contact vs. having no idea you are trying to follow up as requested. The message may indicate your acceptance and provide a clearly spoken return phone number to discuss next steps and any questions you may have.

5. **After accepting an offer**, promptly contact any other firms that have extended offers to you, declining those offers in a professional and courteous manner. Also be sure to inform other employers who are still considering your candidacy. They need to be able to move forward in their search, just as you have done. It also demonstrates professionalism, as well as keeps the door open for future opportunities with the companies, should they surface. Graduating students are asked to notify the Career Center of your position title, company name, and where you will be located for the annual Career Choice Survey.
6. If you determine you do **not** want the position, promptly send a **Letter to Decline** (format at [www.citadel.edu/career\\_services/Interview%20Info/OfferLetterFormat\\_decln.pdf](http://www.citadel.edu/career_services/Interview%20Info/OfferLetterFormat_decln.pdf)). Declining an offer is not to be taken lightly. A non-reply to an offer is unprofessional and could affect your future candidacy with this company should you be interested at another time. It will also affect the reputation of The Citadel and how future students may be considered by this employer. It is appropriate to call and confirm receipt of your letter to decline, unless you have other means of knowing it was received.

If you decide to call the employer instead of sending a formal letter, it is important that you promptly inform him/her of your desire to decline the offer. The employer needs to be able to move forward in filling the position and should you play phone tag, it only makes the situation less favorable. If your contact is out of the office, be sure to leave a voicemail message. This will let the person know that you have attempted to make contact vs. having no idea you are trying to follow up as requested. The message may indicate that you wish to decline the offer or if you prefer to discuss this in person over the phone, simply ask that the person contact you to discuss the job offer. Provide a clearly spoken phone number and a few times/dates when you may be reached. (It is appropriate for you to try again in a couple days should you not hear back. Ultimately, the responsibility of sharing your decision to decline the offer is yours).

7. **When applying to graduate schools**, be sure to follow their individual processes for accepting/declining an offer for admission. In doing so, you may wish to follow-up accordingly with an appropriate letter. Be sure you understand the complete details of admission to include: process for obtaining a graduate assistantship/fellowship, what term you are being admitted for, when you may begin registering for class, orientation meetings, when classes begin, on/off campus housing information, parking information, student fees, etc.